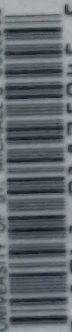


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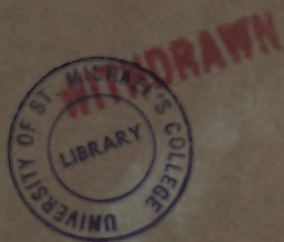
# A HISTORY OF THE WAR



H. C. O'NEILL







2001

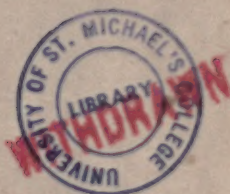




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BY  
B. C. O'NEILL

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LONDON: H. K. JACKSON

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## PREFACE.

THE present book was begun a month after the outbreak of war, and most of the chapters were written within a few months of the events they describe. I hope they gain something from this nearness to the battle. It became my duty, later on, to write week by week accounts and criticisms of the operations for immediate publication. I have seen no evidence to induce me to change the judgment I then formed on most of the campaigns; and I do not think that anything can disturb the main lines of my story.

Some of these chapters could have gone to press almost as they were written at first. The opening chapter I have revised very slightly indeed, although the first draft was written in October 1914. Evidence which has been discovered since then has but filled out the picture and strengthened the conclusion; and I have preferred to leave it as it is, in the conviction that there is much still to come before any one can do full justice to it. Similarly, my account of the Battle of the Marne was written in January 1915, and has been changed hardly at all. It is still one of the least known episodes of the war; but, so far as we know it, it is as I have described.

But when I have made this claim, I frankly confess that it is impossible I should not have erred at times. The field I have attempted to cover is so vast, and the detail so crowded, that I stand a little amazed at my own daring. But I plead guilty to finding a strong fascination in the effort to piece together this moving story from the fragmentary reports, checked point by point on the largest scale maps. I have given my own values to men and things, and the method of treatment is also my own. Though I have read every book upon the war which has come my way, I have valued them most where they gave me *facts*.

The perspective may need a word of explanation. Some chapters mention regiments, some companies, some only divisions and army corps. Some seem to drag with detail; and others, of greater importance, to be swift and general. I have felt that speed and emotion are elements in the perspective of events, and I have therefore tried to convey the effect of these factors in my treatment. But I much regret that by no scale or stratagem could I, within the limits of this book, do full justice to the chief factor of all war—the private soldier. The early and middle part of the war found him obscured by mechanism, and the last part by generalship. But it was he who won the war, he who, at the end, remains the greatest mystery of it. In this sentence I include all private soldiers; but I confess to a predilection for those of my own race, the ordinary "Tommy." Napoleon described him as the best infantry in Europe a hundred years ago; and, after the last campaign, I feel we should not go far wrong in so describing him to-day.

I think I have probably reviewed every English book of any importance which has appeared on the military and naval aspects of the war; and by this I mean



that I have read them carefully. To all of them I owe something. One of them, a remarkable work, I think I must name. Colonel Buchan's *History* is certainly unique. The more I read it, the more I am amazed that any one could have written so satisfying a narrative on the very heels of the events he was describing. The other English books to which I am indebted deal with campaigns beyond the Western front. They include Mr. Washburn's books on the Russian campaign; General Gourko's *Russia in 1914-17*; Mr. G. Ward Price's *The Story of the Salonika Army*; Mr. H. W. Nevinson's *The Dardanelles Campaign*; Mr. Edmund Dane's *British Campaigns in the Near East*; Mr. Edmund Candler's *The Long Road to Baghdad*; and Mr. Massey's book, *The Desert Campaigns*. M. Gabriel Hanotaux's *Histoire Illustrée de la Guerre de 1914* was of considerable use to me for the narrative of the first month of the war, chiefly because of its wealth of detail and its identification of units. A number of German books have been of considerable use. Even such popular publications as the propaganda monthly diary, *Der Krieg, Illustrierte Chronik des Krieges*, 1914-15-16, and Aspern's *Illustrierte Geschichte des europäischen Krieges*, 1914-16, have been of assistance in verifying facts. One or two books dealing with the First Battle of the Marne, which were lent to me, struck me as being more useful to the historian than any books dealing with that battle which have yet appeared in any language, as they traced the route of every German and most French army corps through each day of the battle. When I have made direct use of a book I have indicated the fact.

Official records have naturally been drawn upon considerably. Among these are the various dispatches of the British commanders, *The Report of the Ministry Overseas Forces of Canada*, the *Report of the Comando Supremo on the Battle of Vittorio Veneto*, and *Pourquoi l'Allemagne a Capitulé*. But in the end the responsibility for the history devolves upon me. I have certainly striven very hard that it should not contain inaccuracy, and I trust it is not altogether inhuman. It is the record of the most critical episode in the history of civilisation. The final result of these testing years we shall not know for some time yet; but I have attempted herein to record the steps in process which led to the immediate result in the defeat of Germany.

H. C. O'N.



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# A HISTORY OF THE WAR.

## PART I.

### INTRODUCTION.

#### I. THE BREAKDOWN OF DIPLOMACY.

"I found the Chancellor very agitated. His Excellency . . . said that the step taken by His Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree; just for a word—'neutrality,' a word which in war time had so often been disregarded—just for a scrap of paper Great Britain was going to make war."—[Report of a visit to Herr von Bethmann Hollweg, Imperial Chancellor of Germany, on the evening of August 4, 1914, by Sir G. Goschen, British Ambassador in Berlin.]

ON 28th July Austria-Hungary declared war against Serbia, and began the bombardment of Belgrade. The greatest war in history had begun; for the headlong temper which had forced events to this pass persisted until all but one of the great European Powers had abandoned diplomacy and taken to arms.

Even after these first shots had been fired there were many who hoped that the trouble between Austria and Serbia might still be treated as a domestic quarrel. Austria had just grounds of complaint against Serbia. A month before, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife the Duchess of Hohenberg, had been shot in the streets of Serajevo, the capital of Bosnia. The details of this crime sent a thrill of horror over Europe. The murdered Archduke was a kindly, honourable man, who had married, by the rigid and harsh etiquette of the Viennese Court, morganatically, the daughter of a noble Bohemian house, Countess Sophie Chotek; but there can be little doubt that, if the Archduke had lived to succeed Francis Joseph, rules would have been abrogated in her favour, and she would have taken rank as Empress and Queen. It was a step towards this recognition when the Archduke and his wife were received as the guests of the British Sovereign at London. It was a love marriage, and the Duchess became a true companion and adviser to her husband.

The throne to which the Archduke was heir was not an easy one. The territories of Austria and Hungary were distinct, and were divided by a frontier. Legally and actually, Austrians and Hungarians were foreigners to each other, and naturalisation was requisite for a citizen of one to become a citizen in the other country. This does not exhaust the difficulties of the situation, for besides the two states there was a vast Slav population which was akin to neither, and it is thought the Archduke had dreams of a triple monarchy. Certainly he wished to improve the status and remove the discontent of the Slavs who were one day to be his subjects.

To the horror at the cruelty of the crime there was therefore added the recoil from base ingratitude. It speedily became clear that behind the student Prinzev there was a vast organisation which had its fountain-head in Serbia, and included many influential Servian officers. The murder had been carefully arranged so that there should be no possibility of escape, and two bombs had already been used when the fateful shots were fired. Feeling in Austria-Hungary ran high, and there was a loud outcry for reprisals against Serbia; and all who were cognisant of the facts of the case felt that it was but just that Serbia should punish those at fault and give satisfactory assurances that the roots of the anti-Austrian conspiracy should be torn up.

The moral position of Austria-Hungary was very strong, and it is not weakened by the presentation of the case for Serbia.\* The Narodna Odbrana, the Servian society whose members had organised the murder of the Archduke, had for its object the union of Bosnia, with its Serb population, with the inhabitants of Serbia. When Serbia emerged from its struggle with Turkey in 1878 an independent kingdom, it was a bitter blow that the Turkish provinces Bosnia-Hertzegovina should be given to Austria to administer, and it was not less bitter to the Serbs of these provinces. The Austro-Hungarian administration brought them prosperity, but it could not make them happy; and when, in 1908, Austria-Hungary annexed the provinces, only the sabre-rattling of Austria's ally, Germany, prevented Russia and Serbia from going to war on behalf of their Slav brothers. The "apparition in shining armour" was, to a country not wholly recovered from her war with Japan, a sufficiently cogent argument. Russia stood aside, but did not forget. The next year Serbia had to give pledges to Austria of good behaviour.

The pledges were not kept; indeed it is difficult to see how they could have been. This is not an age when nations can be governed against their will. Racial sentiment is very strong; and when Serbia emerged from the recent Balkan wars the race of farmers had proved its courage and fighting powers, and the old ambition for a Greater Serbia revived with redoubled force.

These considerations do not condone so atrocious a crime, but they serve to reveal something of the idealism which is often the driving force of anarchic outbursts. Austria's case for redress was strong, but on 23rd July she presented demands to Serbia which at once put her in the wrong and caused a European crisis. An answer to the demands was required in forty-eight hours. The ten demands not only included the suppression of the Narodna Odbrana and other anti-Austrian societies, though no *proof* of their complicity was given, and the suppression of various Servian publications, but also a drastic change in the public instruction in Servian schools, the removal of officers and administrative officials, including several mentioned by name, the giving of explanations of anti-Austrian utterances of high Servian officials, and the *acceptance of collaboration in Serbia of representatives of Austria-Hungary for the suppression of anti-Austrian propaganda*.

\* I am attempting to give here the popular emotional atmosphere of the moment. A disclosure made on December 5, 1914, by Signor Giolitti gave a new orientation to the episode. He declared that on August 9, 1913, the Marquis di San Giuliano had informed him that Austria was contemplating an attack upon Serbia and trying to secure Italian support. August 9 was the day before the Treaty of Bukharest was signed, and a new light is thrown upon the Austro-Serb relations by the fact that the Dual Monarchy was not above attacking her southern neighbour when she was exhausted by two campaigns. There are few negotiations between European Governments that can be trusted to remain secret for any length of time, and Serbia could hardly be expected not to resent bitterly the attitude of a powerful neighbour who had meditated a treacherous attack upon her.



These are drastic demands. The inclusion of a time limit and the peremptory tone made them as bitter as they could be to so intensely proud and vigorous a nation as Serbia. Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, as soon as he heard of the inclusion of a time limit, pointed out to the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in London how grave a thing it was, and how much it was calculated to influence Russian public opinion. When the actual terms of the demands were communicated to him, Sir Edward told the Ambassador that he "had never before seen one State address to another independent State a document of so formidable a character."

So matters stood on 24th July. The interest of Great Britain in the matter was limited to the preservation of the peace of Europe; and Sir Edward Grey, who had done so much to limit the area of hostilities in the recent Balkan War, urged upon the German Ambassador that Austria should be persuaded not to precipitate military action. The German Ambassador's suggestion was that Serbia should return an answer favourable on some points. It is clear now that he was not in sympathy with the intentions of Austria-Hungary. The reply of Serbia was so conciliatory, and indeed humble, that even at this stage it was evident that some sinister policy must be behind the actions of the Austro-Hungarian Government as she did not accept it. Serbia even went so far as to agree to the collaboration of Austrian officials so far as was "consonant with the principles of international law, criminal procedure, and good neighbourly relations," and, if so abject a surrender were still unsatisfactory, would be glad to submit the question to arbitration.

The Austrian Minister of Belgrade left the Serbian capital on 25th July, the evening on which the reply was given, and Sir Edward Grey pressed anew his efforts to prevent any irrevocable step. It was quite clear that Russia must be interested in the fate of Serbia; indeed, the Russian Ambassador in Vienna informed the Austrian Foreign Office of this fact. The question which was agitating the minds of Russians was what exactly Austria aimed at. Serbia had unconditionally accepted all the Austrian demands except that which could hardly be granted without sacrificing her independence, and even that she agreed to, conditionally. If Austria was still dissatisfied, then it was reasonable to infer that she had never wished for a satisfactory answer, and was bent upon war. Such a war, whatever the protestations of the Austrian Government, could only result in the subjection of Serbia. It is easy to say that one does not intend to seize territory or touch the sovereignty of a country before war; but when the victorious legions have trampled their facile prey in the dust are they to be expected to lift it up again, Mars become a Good Samaritan?

This inference was pressed home by the Austro-Hungarian newspapers, which clamoured for war; and the British Ambassador at Vienna telegraphed to Sir Edward Grey, upon 27th July, that after conversations with the other Ambassadors he gathered that the demands had been so drawn up as to make war inevitable, and that Austria was determined upon war.

The condition of affairs, if this were the case, was so grave that no one could foresee what might be its ultimate resolution. On this very day the Russian Ambassador had told the Austrian Foreign Office that his Government were not prepared to give way again, as it had done in 1908 when Austria annexed Bosnia. In the face of this candid declaration one would have thought Austria would have paused before precipitating matters. Austria-Hungary, however, declared war

against Serbia on the following day, and under the circumstances, this could only be read as a direct challenge to Russia.

The facts which encouraged Austria in pressing things to this extremity are not now obscure. The popular outcry for war cannot be called an adequate explanation, unless it is admitted that the state of Russian feeling made a war in defence of Serbia equally inevitable, and this the German Ambassador at Vienna refused to admit. But it gradually became clear that another Power was behind Austria, in full sympathy with her course of action, and quite prepared to step in if she were to be attacked by Russia.

The Power behind Austria was Germany. The *coup* of 1908, when the "apparition in shining armour" had prevented Russia interfering, had not been forgotten. The armour was undimmed and quite ready for immediate use. The German Foreign Secretary disclaimed all knowledge of the contents of the Austrian demands before they had been presented to Serbia, and even criticised the tone in which they were framed; but it soon became clear that this was disingenuous. The German Ambassador in Vienna certainly knew the text of the demands before they were sent to Serbia and telegraphed them to his Government; and—on 26th July he informed the British Ambassador that Germany "knew what she was about in backing up Austria-Hungary in this matter."

On that day Sir Edward Grey suggested that the German, French, and Italian Ambassadors should meet him in London to endeavour to find an issue which would prevent complications between Russia and Austria-Hungary. Italy and France at once agreed, and Russia was willing to submit the *impasse* to their judgment. But Germany refused.\* The conference, the German Foreign Secretary thought, would amount to a court of arbitration. He thought a direct conference between the two foreign ministers directly concerned would be preferable.

This, of course, was clearly a better expedient; but, as we have seen, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28th July. What issue could meet that formidable fact? It was difficult to conceive of conversations being carried on between Russia and Austria after the declaration of war. The Austrian Government, in fact, at this stage, declined the Russian suggestion. The immediate object of diplomacy now became the prevention of military operations. The greater part of the Austro-Hungarian forces had been mobilised. Indeed the decree for general mobilisation † had been signed, and Russia ordered the mobilisation of her troops on the Austrian frontier.

Graver and wider issues which had from the first been latent in the situation now began to emerge into the light of day. It began to be clear that Germany and France were taking steps preliminary to mobilisation. Sir Edward Grey, appreciating that the storm-centre had undoubtedly changed to Berlin, and that upon Germany alone all hopes for peace depended, urged upon Germany that, having rejected his proposal, it lay with her to suggest some other means of preventing a European war. But on the evening of 29th July the German Chancellor had a conversation with the British Ambassador at Berlin, which made it at once obvious that the British and German efforts to preserve the peace of Europe meant very different things. To Britain it meant the discovery of some issue upon which Austria on the one hand and Russia and Serbia on the other could agree; to Germany

\* "We insisted on war. . . . Serbia must be massacred."—Lichnowsky, *My Mission to London*, p. 35.

† *Russian Orange Book*, No. 47; p. 283, *Collected Diplomatic Documents*.



it meant the discovery of some means of preserving a free hand to Austria by keeping Russia from proceeding to extremities.

This momentous conversation deserves particular attention. As we have seen, Sir Edward Grey had asked Germany to suggest some form of mediation as she had rejected his proposal; yet on the evening of this same day, 29th July, the German Chancellor raised the question of *the position of Great Britain if Germany attacked France*. Why France? it may be asked. How did she enter into the case? The answer to these questions makes it perfectly clear that Germany was estimating the advantages and disadvantages of war—was, it may fairly be said, reckoning whether it was worth while preserving the semblance of diplomacy any longer, whether it might not, in fact, suit her purposes better to hazard the chances of war.

If Russia attacked Austria, Germany, in conformity with the provisions of the Triple Alliance, would declare war on Russia, and, as France would be bound to assist Russia, under the terms of the Dual Alliance, she would also meet France. "Localisation of the conflict," from the German point of view, meant engaging in war under the most favourable conditions, keeping France out if possible, but, if not, at any rate keeping every other Power out.

The German Chancellor, on this evening, made a definite bid to keep Great Britain out. He understood, he said, that Britain could not see France crushed, but the German Government "aimed at no territorial acquisitions at the expense of France." Pressed as to Germany's intentions with regard to the French colonies, the Chancellor said he could give no undertaking in that respect. The neutrality of Holland would be respected if it was respected by others, and the question of Belgium's neutrality would depend upon the action of the French, but her integrity would be respected if she had not sided against Germany. This meant, though the Chancellor was too prudent to say it, that Belgium would be safe if she took sides with Germany, although by international law she was bound to take sides with no one.

The Chancellor's cynical conversation cannot be taken as a direct answer to the warning Sir Edward Grey had that afternoon given to the German Ambassador, that Germany was not to assume Great Britain would stand aside in the event of a general European conversation. The Chancellor, as appears from his own statements later, had not then been notified of the tenor of Sir Edward Grey's conversation with the German Ambassador.

Sir Edward Grey's reply to the German offer was prompt and decisive. Great Britain could be no party to such a bargain. She could not bind herself to stand by while France was beaten and her colonies filched. The proposition was disgraceful, and Britain's good name would never recover from any bargain of the sort. Neither could she bargain away the neutrality of Belgium.

This brings us to 30th July, on which day the French Ambassador reminded Sir Edward Grey that he had engaged that if the peace of Europe were to be seriously threatened the two countries should discuss what they should do. At the same time the Ambassador produced evidence that German military preparations were in a much more advanced state than the French, and that he felt Germany would most likely call upon France to cease her preparations or to engage to remain neutral in case of a conflict between Germany and Russia. The day following, this very thing the French Government had foreseen actually occurred.

The answer of the British Government to Germany's bid for British neutrality was read to the German Chancellor on the morning of 31st July. On this day, strangely enough, *the conversations between Austria and Russia were resumed*, and Sir Edward Grey made yet another offer to Germany which is too significant to pass over. He said that if Germany could forward any proposal which made it clear that Germany and Austria were working for peace, and that Russia and France would be unreasonable if they rejected it, he would support it even so far as to tell Russia and France that if they did reject it Great Britain would wash her hands of the consequences.

It was at this point that Russia decided to announce a general mobilisation.\* The reasons which led to this step are not obscure. Russia had come to know of the advanced state of military preparations in Germany, and could not afford to lose time. In estimating the true character of this action on the part of Russia it must be borne in mind that one or two days, a week, or even a fortnight, did not, so far as Russia was concerned, matter very much to Germany. In the opinion of military experts Germany could mobilise at least twice, and probably three times, as quickly as Russia. While Russia could only say, "I shall begin military operations in a month," Germany was able to say, "I shall begin in ten days." Russian mobilisation was, then, a comparatively remote menace, and Germany, if she had really wished to preserve peace in any sense except that of humiliating Russia at the expense of Servia, could well have afforded to wait a considerable time. This is all the more true as Germany knew France wished for peace, and, in fact, was very ill prepared for war. On the part of Russia it was but a prudent precaution to take such measures in view of the German preparations, and this conclusion is not in any sense modified by the fact that the Tsar had appealed to the Kaiser to mediate at Vienna. When Germany began to load her guns it behoved Russia at least to begin to *make* hers.

Sir Edward Grey now asked Germany, France, and Belgium whether they were prepared to respect Belgian neutrality. France at once replied that she was resolved not to violate the neutrality of Belgium unless it were violated by some other country; indeed, the French Ambassador at Brussels had spontaneously made this declaration before Sir Edward Grey's question had been addressed to France.† Belgium replied that she looked to other Powers not to violate her neutrality, and for her own part was resolved to defend it to the limits of her power. Germany's answer was at first that no reply could be given without disclosing her plan of campaign, and that in any case she would require to know the French reply.

Great Britain had made it quite plain to Germany that the question of Belgian neutrality was one which was very grave for her. So far nothing had occurred which directly concerned her. In the peace of Europe she was undoubtedly interested, but not directly. The neutrality of Belgium was, however, a question in which Britain was deeply concerned. It had been devised as an expedient

\* The Tsar had signed the order for the general mobilisation on the afternoon of the 29th. It was not countersigned by the Ministers till late in the evening, and could not be fully under way until it was announced. Herr Kurt Eisner, former editor of *Vorwärts*, stated in the *Chemnitzer Zeitung* that "on 28th July, therefore, . . . the German mobilisation had already been decided upon."

† On the same day, 31st July, the German Ambassador in Brussels was given an opportunity to confirm the statement of his predecessor, that Belgian neutrality would be preserved, and he did so. Yet, in spite of this, in the evening of 2nd August, the very same person approached the Belgian Foreign Minister, and offered him, in the name of Germany, to adopt a friendly attitude towards Belgium if she allowed the Kaiser's troops to pass through the country, but informing him that, if she put difficulties in the way, Germany would treat her as an enemy. Twelve hours were allowed for a decision.



to prevent war between the Great Powers, and Great Britain, Russia, France, and indeed Prussia, were Powers which had given their word to uphold it. It was a very grave question as to whether British public opinion might not demand that the army should now uphold it against an aggressor.

Germany, after two months of the war, and after a clear and formal admission by the Chancellor in the Reichstag that she had done wrong, justifying it under the plea that necessity knows no law, made a belated attempt to prove that the neutrality had been violated long before this time. In Brussels she announced that she had found plans concerted with Great Britain some years ago for the defence of Belgium. But this specious pretext is clearly invalid in light of the fact that Germany had made no secret that her attack against France would take place through Belgium, and that it was equally well known that the French attack would be directed through Alsace. Belgium, bound to defend her status, might quite reasonably inquire what measures would be taken by the only Power outside the two great European alliances which were directly concerned in violating her neutrality. Germany's attempt to whitewash her admitted guilt deceived no one.

On the other hand, Germany, with her characteristically crude misconception of the state of Great Britain, presumably thought, after making several bids to secure the assurance of British neutrality,\* that, as she had not secured it by these offers, it was difficult to see any means of securing it, and that, trading upon Britain's known pacific intentions and her assumed political divisions, Germany might as well risk it to gain what seemed so great an advantage.

Obsessed with these views, on this day, 31st July, she demanded that Russia should, within twelve hours, give an assurance that mobilisation had ceased or else Germany would at once order the total mobilisation of her own army on the Russian and *French* frontiers. In communicating this fact to the French Government the German Ambassador at Paris demanded what attitude the French Government would adopt under the circumstances, threatening "to break off relations and leave Paris if the reply were unsatisfactory." Germany demanded that Russia should cease her mobilisation both on the German and Austrian frontiers, and it was at this moment that the Austro-Hungarian Government had agreed to discuss the very thing which had produced this crisis. The Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg on this day expressed the readiness of his Government to discuss the substance of the ultimatum to Serbia. Germany was, therefore, left in the strange position of demanding more than Austria herself.

The French Government protested to the German Ambassador against his addressing to them so menacing a communication and threatening to break off

\* Mr. Bernard Shaw sees in Sir Edward Grey's rejection of these offers (dispatch 123) a proof that Great Britain meant to join France and Russia. He represents the German Ambassador in London telling the Kaiser, after this conversation, "that it was now a fight to the finish between the British and German Empires." Mr. Shaw must be hard pressed for a case against Great Britain to take refuge in this dispatch, which *proves* only one thing, that Germany wished to make war. The rest is inference, and Mr. Shaw cannot have it both ways. In the paragraph preceding that in which he seizes upon dispatch 123 (*Commonsense about the War*, p. 8), he says that Sazonof, the Russian Foreign Minister, was "precisely right" in holding that if Great Britain took its stand "firmly with France and Russia" there would be no war. But in this dispatch Mr. Shaw says Great Britain *did* firmly take its stand with France and Russia. Leaving Mr. Shaw to extricate himself from this deadlock, it may be suggested that if Sir Edward Grey was trying to prevent an outbreak of war he could hardly have done better than take up this warning attitude, refusing to be bought off. But to say, "we refuse to bind ourselves not to join" in, is far removed from saying or meaning that "we shall join in"; and so Germany took it, as is shown by the Chancellor's surprised outburst on 4th August.

relations if the reply were to be unsatisfactory while there were no differences at issue between France and Germany. The next day, 1st August, orders were given in Berlin and Paris for the general mobilisation of the army and navy, and the German Government in the evening declared war on Russia.

Early on Sunday morning, 2nd August, the Germans entered the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, a State which, like Belgium, had been formed independent and neutral for the same reasons as Belgium. Like Belgium it stood on the highway between two great States, and its neutrality opposed a last obstacle to war. With a cynical indifference to international law Germany, who had pleaded that she could not afford to allow Russia to mobilise even a day without threatening counter measures, invaded Luxemburg on the "first" day of mobilisation. The object of her action was perfectly clear; and, in reply to a request from the French Government as to what Britain was prepared to do, Sir Edward Grey the same morning informed the French Ambassador that, subject to the approval of Parliament, the British fleet would give every protection in its power if the German fleet came through the North Sea or into the Channel to undertake hostile operations against the French coasts or shipping. This did not bind England to go to war, unless Germany acted in this particular manner. It was a promise to some extent conditioned by the fact that the disposition of the French fleet in the Mediterranean had had the effect of releasing a number of British battleships for service elsewhere—had in effect saved Britain an expenditure which would otherwise have been necessary.

British freedom of action, which Sir Edward Grey had been so careful to preserve through all the difficult negotiations of the preceding ten days, was prejudiced no further than this, that Great Britain would not allow Germany to bombard the northern coasts of France and imperil the trade routes she had left defenceless owing to the feeling of friendship which had grown up between France and Britain in recent years. France had taken, and was still taking, every means in her power to avoid any conflict. The French advance posts were drawn back from the frontier some six miles, despite the protests of the local inhabitants against being abandoned to German attack. As early as 30th July two German army corps had been moved up to the frontier; and there is evidence to show that the German military preparations had begun some nine days before—two days before the Austrian demands had even been delivered to Servia. Further, evidence of the designs of Germany is furnished by the fact that Italy, the third member of the Triple Alliance, Germany's ally, on 1st August declared that it was her intention to remain neutral, as, the war being one of aggression on the part of Germany and Austria, she was not bound under the terms of the Alliance to give support.

At this moment the position presented a strange anomaly. Between Austria and Russia there was no interruption of the ordinary course of diplomacy, although it was the friction between these two nations which had caused the crisis. Germany had declared war against Russia, but had at once invaded the territory of a southern and neutral neighbour whose frontiers were a window into France. She had further offered Belgium friendly neutrality, and promised to maintain her independence if she would give free passage to the German troops, and had threatened, in case of refusal, to treat Belgium as an enemy. Twelve hours were given for a reply.

On 3rd August Sir Edward Grey made in the House of Commons a momentous speech, in which he described the course of his negotiations for peace. He



reminded the House that Bismarck in 1870 gave verbally and in writing an undertaking to respect the neutrality of Belgium. Later in the evening he informed the House of the German ultimatum to Belgium, and the latter's reply that morning that the acceptance of the German proposal would be the sacrifice of her honour as a nation. "Belgium is firmly resolved to repel aggression by every possible means."

Belgium by this resolve showed clearly of what fibre she was made. Who could have blamed her if she had yielded to superior force, and thereby won at least the tolerance of her powerful neighbour? She could have had no delusions as to the power or ruthlessness of Germany; yet such was her spirit that when, in the course of the day, the French offered her military support, she courteously but firmly declined the offer.

The next day, 4th August, the King of the Belgians appealed to King George for diplomatic intervention to safeguard the integrity of Belgium. Sir Edward Grey at once telegraphed this fact to the British Ambassador in Berlin, and ordered him to request an immediate assurance that Belgian neutrality would be respected. A little later the Belgian Legation in London informed the British Government that Belgian territory had been entered at Gemmenich, near Aix-la-Chapelle, by the German troops, and that Liège had been summoned to surrender. The German commentary upon this action was furnished by the German Ambassador, who was instructed to "*dispel any mistrust*" with regard to her intentions by "repeating most positively formal assurance that, even in case of armed conflict with Belgium, Germany will, under no pretence whatever, annex Belgian territory. . . . German army could not be exposed to French attack across Belgium, which was planned according to absolutely unimpeachable information.\* Germany had consequently to disregard Belgian neutrality, it being for her a question of life or death to prevent French advance."

What a strange psychology this reveals! Assume her case against France to be good, what a perfect justification for seizing and holding Belgium altogether. As we know, France had given a formal assurance to respect Belgian neutrality. Then Germany, having broken her word in one case, thinks to "*dispel any mistrust*" by offering another. Bankrupt of honour, she pledges her word as to her good intentions.

A final instruction was now given to the British Ambassador in Berlin. He was ordered to request by midnight a definite assurance to respect Belgian neutrality. If the assurance was refused, he was to ask for his passports, and to inform the German Government that Great Britain felt bound to take all steps in her power to "uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which she was as much a party as ourselves."

The German reply was a definite refusal. The British Ambassador urged that there was still five hours between then and midnight, and, in view of the terrible consequences, he suggested the reconsideration of the decision. But the Foreign Secretary said no other answer could be given. The Ambassador asked to see the Imperial Chancellor. The Chancellor was very agitated. This step was being taken "just for a word," just for a "scrap of paper." "Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her."

\* So far is this from being the case that much French territory went through the agony of a four years' occupation, because France had made no adequate preparation to deal with a German blow through Belgium.

"Just for a word" which that very day Germany had used to "dispel any mistrust" caused by her breaking another "word"! Just for a "scrap of paper," which was the reason of Austria's declaration of war against Servia! These are splendid and perhaps the noblest things to fight for, the sacredness of a pledged word and the inviolability of a bond.

At midnight Continental time, at 11 P.M. in England, Great Britain was in a state of war with Germany. French territory had been invaded by Germany on 2nd August, and on 3rd August war was declared. Three days later Austria declared war against Russia. A little over a week later France and Great Britain declared war against Austria, and towards the end of the month\* Austria declared war upon Belgium.

\* \* \* \* \*

It has been necessary to follow the wearying and circuitous paths of diplomacy somewhat closely; for future generations, counting the hideous toll of life in this most terrible of wars, will inevitably ask who was responsible. A summing up might proceed by the method of exclusion. It is perfectly clear that Great Britain did not wish for war. She strove from the very beginning to the very end to avoid it. She had been pressed by Russia and France time after time to pledge them her support, but she refused. It is equally clear (and it was admitted by Germany) that France did not wish for war, and was not prepared for it. Russia did not wish for war unless it were to be the price of Servia's independence; but to the end she was willing to put herself into the hands of the four Great Powers not directly concerned. Austria did not wish for war except with Servia, and at the eleventh hour she was willing to discuss even the substance of her ultimatum to Servia with Russia. Germany declared war just when the cause of all the trouble seemed nearest to being removed, when Austria was willing to discuss the obnoxious demands with Russia. If Germany did not wish for war, she dissembled her aims in so consummate a fashion that Russia, France, and Italy were convinced she wished for it; if she did not wish for war, at least there was within her borders a war party † which would not be denied, and in the end had its way.

## II. THE BRITISH EMPIRE AT WAR.

"We are fighting for a worthy purpose, and we shall not lay down our arms until that purpose has been fully achieved."—[The King's Speech, at the prorogation of Parliament, September 18, 1914.]

It is a dangerous state of things for peace when a powerful nation becomes convinced that her neighbours are all not only unwilling to go to war, but are unprepared to wage war be they ever so bellicose.

Now it is quite clear that Germany possessed such a conviction, and one of the

\* Her siege howitzers, however, were used against Liège in spite of the fact that war had not then been declared.

† This inference no longer requires proof owing to the growing body of evidence from the German side; but it receives additional confirmation from dispatch No. 3 of the *French Yellow Book*, which reports some remarks of General von Moltke. The concluding sentence of these runs as follows: "We must anticipate our principal adversary as soon as there are nine chances to one of going to war, and begin it without delay, in order ruthlessly to crush all resistance." This, however, might be written down as mere theory. It was said some time before the war. But read it in the light of the declaration of the German Under-Secretary of State on 30th July, that "the military authorities are very anxious that mobilisation should



greatest, if not the deciding factor in the action of Germany is a vast series of errors of fact and inference. Russia was supposed to be unprepared for war. The reorganisation after the Russo-Japanese War was held to be far from complete, and the country, torn asunder by a huge strike, seemed in no fit state to wage a war against the forces of Austria and Germany. Besides, Russia had become almost a popular fiction for its social discontent, unrest, and disaffection from the Government.

France was also unprepared for war. The Three Years' Service Bill, which was to increase the French standing army to something like the old ratio to Germany's recently increased army, had met with profound hostility in the country. Two years' service was a burden; three years seemed a crime. M. Poincaré, the President, had powerful political enemies who seemed determined to cause as much trouble as possible. Charges and countercharges in connection with the trial of Mme. Caillaux for shooting the editor of the *Figaro* made an encouraging picture of political disunion and intrigue for those who looked merely at the surface of things.

Great Britain was, however, Germany's Benjamin, the child of her old age, the child of promise. An engrained habit of criticising one's own with the utmost fierceness, of fighting political battles to the "last ditch," of permitting and pursuing courses of action which look more like the most unbridled licence rather than freedom, and to the undiscerning outsider seem to argue administrative impotence—were these not a splendid augury? Ireland was on the verge of civil war, England torn with dissensions over the issue. The British Colonies were all awaiting an excuse to rise against the Mother Country. Surely Great Britain could be ignored in the calculations. Even if she took part, which was sufficiently unthinkable in the circumstances, Sir John French's little army was contemptible, and could only provide a carpet for the German hosts on their march to Paris. There was the British fleet; but the German fleet was powerful, and the most powerful fleet possible could not defend Warsaw or stem the rush to Paris.

Before the war were not such views feasible? Looking on events in retrospect, how trivial and foolish they seem. For once war was declared the face of Europe changed. Dissensions sank out of sight. For the first time in history Russia became a nation, a nation energised and on fire with one idea. The most extreme of revolutionaries discovered Russia written on his heart, and became more patriotic than the patriots. France, with the enemy at her gates, remembered her glorious past, sobered and settled down to the grim struggle, strengthened her administration, and prepared for the best.

And nowhere did the lines of cleavage disappear more rapidly than in Great Britain. On 3rd August Mr. Bonar Law, in the House of Commons, announced that the Unionist party were prepared to support the Government "in whatever steps they think it necessary to take for the honour and security of this country." He admitted, later in the year, that the Unionist party had given this undertaking to Mr. Asquith in writing on 2nd August. But what of the civil war? Mr. Redmond, the Nationalist leader, said: "In past times, when this Empire has been engaged in these terrible enterprises, it is true, and it would be folly on my part to deny it, the sympathies of the Nationalists of Ireland, for reasons to be found deep down in

be ordered, because *every delay makes Germany lose some of her advantages*" (*Yellow Book*, 38). According to Count Czernin, the German Ambassador in Vienna was responsible for the truculent attitude of Austria. He was convinced that Germany must soon fight Russia and France, and seized upon 1914 because Russia and France were then less prepared, and because Austria-Hungary could be drawn into the war.

centuries of history, have been estranged from this country. . . . What has occurred in recent years has altered the situation completely. . . . I say to the Government that they may to-morrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland. I say that the coasts of Ireland will be defended from foreign invasion by her armed sons, and for this purpose armed Nationalist Catholics in the South will be only too glad to join arms with the armed Protestants and Ulstermen in the North." \*

With the disappearance of the Irish question disappeared also the pacifists. Manifestos were signed and circulated by men who had given their lives to working for peace. Writers, dramatists, men of science, Churchmen—all were at one on the question once war was declared, and in this most free of countries few indeed were the voices raised against the war.

On Sunday, 2nd August, the daily newspapers made an unusual appearance. Strange snatches of conversations were heard in the streets: "Germany must . . ."—"The Kaiser . . ."—"Against France . . ."—"The fleet . . ."—and so on. The one topic of absorbing interest was the war. For some days before and some after the declaration of war huge crowds congregated in Whitehall, round the War Office, round the entrance to Downing Street, round the Houses of Parliament. At night crowds of people of all classes packed the open space before Buckingham Palace, cheering and singing "God save the King"; and on several occasions the King and Queen and Prince of Wales appeared on the balcony.

The enthusiasm was general. The issue, as people seized upon it, was that they were fighting in defence of Belgium. As Mr. Asquith put it: "We are fighting to vindicate the principle that small nationalities are not to be crushed, in defiance of international good faith, by the arbitrary will of a strong and overmastering Power." Remotely, also, Britain was fighting for her own liberty, which would have been menaced if she had permitted Germany to absorb Belgium and reduce France to a virtual servitude. But this was not the issue which took hold of men's minds. Grudging of effort in her own behalf, unless, indeed, the menace were too obvious to ignore, the heart of Great Britain was quick to respond to the call made upon it by a small and valiant nation threatened by the mightiest military organisation the world has ever known.

Great Britain was prepared. On 18th July the fleet had been assembled, in accordance with arrangements formed long before, for the visit of the King. The vast fleet of 230 vessels of all sorts, from the super-Dreadnoughts to the submarines, with waterplanes and airships besides, formed the greatest array of fighting ships ever known. The fleet put to sea for exercises, and then two fleets returned to Portland to disperse for the customary leave. But the menacing note to Servia had been presented by Austria, and the dispersal was postponed. On 29th July the fleets left for their war stations, that all might be ready for any eventuality; and such was their preparedness† and spirit that within three hours of the declaration of war British submarines were patrolling the bays and river-mouths of Germany's North Sea coast.

The army, disproportionately small for conflict with the conscript European

\* The attitude of Ireland later in the war is discussed in Chapter 8, Book III. Part iii.

† This must be understood to refer to the *general* preparedness. The fleet had no safe anchorage for some months, and the story that two German spies who disclosed this fact were shot seems to be true. The German Staff could not believe that the fleet was virtually at the mercy of a surprise night attack. It was thought that the men had been bribed by the British.



armies, was well equipped and splendidly trained, the only army except the Russian which had had the training of actual fighting. Lord Kitchener became Secretary for War "for the duration of the war, or for three years, if it lasted" so long, and the organisation was so perfect that on 10th August, not a week after the declaration of war, the troops were being landed at Boulogne, and by the 23rd two and a half divisions, completely equipped, had taken their stand in the firing line.

Great Britain looked buoyantly forward to the war. Not yet were the streets darkened at nights and the sky cut into huge swaths of light by the scythe-like beams of searchlights hidden away on odd high places. Not yet were the entrenchments thrown up along the coast, round Edinburgh, and at places likely to be subject to attack. The week of crisis was passed, and all hearts were steelled to the conflict. Little was there that was noisy or protesting; there was very little animus as yet against the Germans or Austrians.

What was necessary was done to restore, so far as possible, the life of the country to the normal. There had been panic on the Stock Exchanges, and the system of credit which is the foundation of modern business collapsed. The bank rate on 31st July went up from 4 to 8 per cent., and was fixed at 10 per cent. on 1st August. Numbers of well-known houses failed—seven in one day—and it became necessary on 31st July to follow the example of the Continental Exchanges and close the London Stock Exchange. The mechanism of credit is the procedure known as bills of exchange, the payment of which British houses guarantee on the assumption that the firms, foreign or English, will redeem them by money payments. The failure to redeem the bills would mean bankruptcy for the British guaranteeing houses. On 2nd August a proclamation was issued legalising the postponement of payment of bills of exchange accepted before the outbreak of war. But this only helped one class of people, and it did so at the expense of those houses which relied on the bills being promptly paid.

Ten days later, therefore, the Bank of England was empowered to accept and discount at 5 per cent. all bills normally acceptable, guaranteeing the bank against any loss incurred in so doing. A month later a further measure helped still more the acceptor of bills he could not meet. The proclamation of 12th August had allowed him to defer payment indefinitely by paying the bank interest at 2 per cent. above the bank rate; now he could borrow at a similar rate to pay the bills. Repayment was not to be pressed for a year after the end of the war.

The effect of the proclamation of 2nd August and of these subsequent proclamations was to relieve one class of sufferers from the collapse of the credit system. The relief was extended to debtors generally on 6th August. This general moratorium enabled creditors to postpone payment of debts excepting certain specified classes of debts, such as wages, for one month, and the period was later extended so that a delay of three months, and in some cases four months, might elapse. Debts so postponed were to bear interest at the rate of 6 per cent. Still further protection was given by the Courts (Emergency Powers) Act, which made it impossible to "levy distress, resume possession of property, foreclose," or enforce the judgment of a court without a further application to the court. By this Act a sort of benevolent power was given to the courts to suspend proceedings for the recovery of debt.

Another difficulty which the Government had to cope with was the tendency of depositors to demand payment from their banks in gold. The rush which com-

menced on 31st July assumed serious proportions, and some check had to be imposed upon it. August 3 was bank holiday, and the holiday was extended to include Thursday. The banks reopened upon Friday with £1 and 10s. notes as legal tender, and even postal orders were used in place of money.

A further step was taken to re-establish credit by a Government scheme of war insurance on ships. Shipowners were afraid to send uninsured ships to sea, and if the Government had not come to the assistance of the underwriters the whole carrying trade of the country, and with it the supply of food and industrial necessities, would have ceased.

All these enactments, each in its own way, did much to restore the credit system and to re-establish normal trade conditions, and the normal tenor of life in the country, so that, when the banks reopened on Friday, 7th August, £5,600,000 was received in gold by the Bank of England, and signs of the hoarding of gold had disappeared. Trade began to fall back into its accustomed beat. The war insurance rate upon cargo had fallen from £5. 5s. to £4. 4s. per cent.

The prices of food had risen sharply at first, and the tendency to buy in large stocks of staple foodstuffs was partly the cause as well as the effect of this development. Middle-class people were seen in London streets driving home in motor cars with sacks of flour and supplies of peas, beans, and sugar. Humbler householders contented themselves with smaller supplies, and might be seen wheeling baby-carriages loaded with biscuit-tins filled with flour, peas, etc. A committee of the Cabinet was formed to deal with this condition of affairs, and on 5th August the maximum retail cash prices for certain staples, such as sugar, cheese, and bacon, were issued, to have effect up to and including 10th August. On 7th August, however, the Board of Agriculture announced that there was then in the United Kingdom an ample supply of foodstuffs for at least five months. On Saturday, 8th August, the situation in Great Britain had so far returned to the normal that the bank rate was reduced to 5 per cent.

Readjustments had to be made in a different direction. It was clear that the armed forces were totally inadequate to play any decisive part in the war of millions upon the Continent, and the army had to be newly conceived upon a scale with which no existing organisation was framed to cope, and for which no precedent afforded a guide. Fortunately there was at the War Office from 5th August a Minister who possessed the confidence of the country, a confidence inspired almost as much by the spell of his strong personality as by his unforgettable achievements in the field and in administration in Egypt and in India. Lord Kitchener was essentially the War Minister for which the times and circumstances called, and his appointment aroused great enthusiasm.

The House of Commons on Thursday, 6th August, unanimously passed a vote of credit for £100,000,000, and sanctioned an increase of the army by 500,000 men. The call for recruits was responded to with such vigour that the machinery at the War Office could not at first deal with the numbers who presented themselves. Such crowds flocked to the chief recruiting office in Whitehall that the side street in which was the entrance was for days a seething, struggling mass of men. As early as six o'clock in the morning men began to take up their stand by the doors in order to secure early admission. In a few days branch recruiting offices were opened in various parts of London, as throughout the country.

In a little time the streets everywhere resounded to the tramp of armed men.



The traffic would be held up in Oxford Street or the Strand while a seemingly endless column of recruits rolled by, singing and whistling. No one could fail to notice the splendid character of the men; young, well-built, confident, they formed the best augury of the success of the Allies. In one of the many crude fictions with which German officials amused the world was the spectacle of a heterogeneous, decrepit handful of men, which was the best Great Britain could muster, even with the bribe of 5s. per day, to help her allies in France and Belgium. Over against this caricature was placed the splendid legions of the Kaiser. The British troops were supposed to be mercenaries, and the Kaiser's soldiers perfervid patriots. The case was exactly the reverse. The splendid troops which Great Britain was enrolling were men who responded to the call of their country for no bribe, but very frequently at great personal loss, and in the early days of the war they were badly housed, poorly fed, and made to suffer all the disadvantages of responding too eagerly to the country's call. The Kaiser's troops, good as they undoubtedly were, were, after all is said, men compulsorily pressed into service. Whatever the British recruits lacked, they were not deficient in the will and wish to fight. Neither of these things can be necessarily said of a conscript army.

Strange scenes might be seen at Woolwich. Here was the war in little, brought to a focus. In one part of the Common youths could be seen going through the drill which makes them into a force, moving with the automatic precision and grace of a limb, which makes a well-drilled infantry such an inspiring thing to watch. In another part, not many yards distant, men would be seen exercising with quick-firers or machine guns. Farther still, an officer, looking isolated and remote among chafing horses and large guns, might be heard shouting some order, "The battery will now retire," and forthwith the whole scene was bustle and movement as the battery got under way. In another place were men "getting a heave on" to a big naval gun. Here were men at work with range-finders or heliographs; there were officers practising with the field telephone.

Up and down the United Kingdom such and similar scenes were daily re-enacted. From British Dominions beyond the seas came the news of enthusiastic offers of help. India clamoured to do her share, and the native princes offered themselves for service in almost any capacity. Australia and New Zealand sent their contingent. Early in October Canadian troops were on training-grounds in England, going through exercises preliminary to being sent to the front. South Africa, with the exception of a few bribed soldiers and the traitorous De Wet and Beyers, was undertaking service against the German Colony in South Africa. Everywhere enthusiasm to help.

When the Prince of Wales issued his appeal for money to alleviate distress the response was prompt and magnificent. Huge sums were given by the native princes in India, and the fund rose to well over £3,000,000 early in October.

Women imprisoned for the suffrage agitation had been released, and at once set themselves to do their share in the National Service. Women were everywhere busied with some sort of work to help in the war. Some organisations were formed which could provide almost any service. Boy Scouts were soon pressed into the public service, and all the nation, from the highest to the lowest, set itself to do what it could for the common good.

## III. GERMANY'S DREAM OF WORLD POWER.

"Treaties are the currency of international statesmanship. This doctrine of the 'scrap of paper' goes to the root of public law. It is the straight road to barbarism. . . . The Prussian junker is the road-hog of Europe. Small nationalities in his way hurled to the roadside, bleeding and broken; women and children crushed under the wheels of his cruel car."—[Mr. Lloyd George's speech at the Queen's Hall, September 19, 1914.]

THE most significant result of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 was the birth of the German Empire. Prussia had settled the question of the dominant Germanic power by her victory over Austria in 1866. But Prussia alone was only a significant, a powerful, but not a dominant factor in the European situation. Her population was almost exactly that of Great Britain, and only less than that of the United Kingdom by the population of Ireland. Supported by a strong and virile race, the Prussian State by itself would have played but a minor rôle in the world's history.

But the German confederation which emerged from the Franco-Prussian War was something more than the German Empire: it was a *nation* in all essential points, and it had grown to be more and more a nation with each year of its existence. It was, moreover, the one nation in Europe which was content to live under the rule of an absolute if benevolent despotism, with many shows of power, but with very little voice indeed in the shaping of its own destiny. There was more real freedom and democratic rule in autocratic Russia. Germany waived the dubious if self-satisfying advantages of self-rule for the sake of the tangible benefits of good and efficient rule.

Such a nation, disciplined, well-educated, simple, and patriotic, has the defects of its advantages. In the final resort it must take its political ideas from above. It was ever at the mercy of him whom the king delighteth to honour. It was shaped, but did not shape; directed, but did not direct; it spoke with one voice, but that voice was not necessarily its own.

Germany emerged from the Franco-Prussian War not only a nation but a victorious nation, a nation in arms, a nation with a great prestige gained by a good army, well directed according to a carefully-prepared and well-thought-out plan. What more natural than that such a nation, with such a history, should keep ever in its breast a niche of the highest eminence for armed force?

Germany had wonderfully advanced since the King of Prussia became German Emperor. Her industries and commerce had grown by leaps and bounds. She had already to some extent conquered the world by securing control over many branches of industry—such as drug and dye manufactures, the products of which are essential to every nation. She held a commanding position in science. Most students of science everywhere were brought up on the German tradition. Her flag was to be found on every sea; her children had taken root in every land. She had large and important colonies. But she was not content. The spirit of conquest had secured an abiding resting-place in her blood.

What was it that she craved? She could fare where she would; she could trade wherever trade was possible; but she wanted more. She fretted after "expansion." She was not conspicuously successful in colonial government, but that she attributed to having failed to secure the right colonies. She wanted a "place in the sun."



Professor Ashley has pointed out that German emigration was only one-tenth of that of Great Britain, and, in proportion to the general population, was only one-sixth in 1914 what it was in 1891. And the density of population in Germany was not three-quarters of that of Great Britain, and not half that of Belgium. But expansion was her cry. Her intellectual greatness, her *amour-propre*, convinced her that the disposition of things was at fault. A generation of writers had arisen which played ever these same airs. The score might be transposed, the key might be changed, but the air was ever the same.

Strangely enough, the most influential of these writers who sunned themselves in the glow of imperial favour held that Great Britain had been unsuccessful with her colonies, that each and every one of them was on the verge of revolt. They found the reason of this in the bungling methods of the British administration. They could not even imagine the existence of a spirit in the healthiest nations which claimed self-rule. Alsace had taught them no lesson. Unwelcome lessons are grasped tardily. It was on these very British Colonies, which were, in fact, self-governing dominions, and, with the exception of India, colonies in name only, they cast envious eyes. They felt that they had looked on the fair places of the world, but everywhere they found a man in possession. He must be dispossessed, then; and this, in a word, meant war.

Let us not make the mistake of thinking such an attitude unnatural. It is quite as natural as the attitude of those who are determined to maintain what their fathers won. Who will persuade the child of Adam, born naked into this world, to remain naked and not to do his best to conquer for himself as much as he can of wealth and power for the freedom, leisure, and conditions favourable to develop himself on his own lines? It is easy to be conservative and content when one has all one desires. But the evil of the German position was that it was prepared to set all law at defiance. Law is just as necessary among nations as within them. A man who is physically stronger and clever enough to apply his strength well cannot justly and lawfully break into the house of a rich invalid and steal all he possesses. Neither can a nation justly or rightly steal the possessions of another nation.

But the German theorists were not to be deterred by mere ethics. The ready axiom, "Necessity knows no law," carried them safely over the breach. Expansion was necessary, therefore—war. General von Bernhardt, in a book all should read, does not shirk any of the difficulties. War is necessary, he says, not only for expansion, but even *biologically*. By dexterously twisting round Darwinism he makes war an essential element in vital development. People who hate war and conceive of it only as a thing so horrible that they can hardly look upon it as a last resort, as a choice between the greatest of evils, are decadent, are already falling back in the race of life. He does not seem to have considered that those who hate war as the last vestige of the brute in man, and who will avoid it by any means in their power, may still have the spirit, the genius, and the physical virility to wage war, if it must be waged, with success against those who look on it as a holy thing, and have turned all their energies to preparing for it.

The point to grasp about General von Bernhardt is that he represented the opinion of the ruling caste in Germany, who had set all their genius to the problem of war, who conceived war as inevitable—particularly with France, and finally Great Britain—who deliberately chose it as the means to their end. This is now perfectly clear: Germany's peaceful efforts and peace movement meant something

quite different from the peace movements of other countries. They meant that, if every other nation would yield to her dominance, even to the extent of sacrificing their dominions, Germany was eager to be friendly with them. But on these terms only. War was planned carefully against every European nation. German spies were everywhere; and just as Mr. Hornung's hero, "Raffles," saw every house he entered from the point of view of the burglar, and took an impression of a key instinctively, so Germany looked upon other countries, and bought up every scrap of information about their harbours, ships of war, armies, and so forth. Even the weaknesses of generals might some day be turned to account. This extraordinary spy system the British find difficult to understand; but it was part, and a very useful part, of Germany's preparations for war.

The craving for dominance was not only the spirit of a caste, it had become engrained in the nation's soul. Contrast the song which the Germans sing to Haydn's beautiful music, "Deutschland über alles," with "Rule, Britannia." Britain will "rule the waves" so that "Britons never may be slaves"; but "Germany *over all*" was the claim of Germans. However much the apologist insist that the German sang the singleness of the German devotion to his country, the sense in which it was generally accepted was certainly that of German dominance.

With a splendid candour Germany even announced her strategy against different nations and combinations of nations. It was well known that she would march against France through Belgium. It was equally well known what her naval tactics would be against Great Britain. Everything had been carefully thought out. Risks were estimated and provided against; yet how mistaken she has been the course of the war has shown.

In conscript nations a rough estimate of military power is given by the respective populations. There are other factors which modify an estimate conceived on such a basis. If France had been as decadent as Germany thought her, hardly any numbers could have availed her. Time, again, is of the first importance in war. Other things being equal, a nation which can mobilise in ten days should stand the better chance of victory against a nation which requires a month, even if it has double the population. The smaller army could be in the field nearly three weeks before the larger was ready, and could deal it a smashing blow. But numbers, given the time, and assuming the troops to be equally brave, well equipped, and directed, must be finally decisive. And this should make us realise the state of "nerves" which had grown up in Germany in recent years.

On her eastern borders was the mighty nation Russia, with its millions of people. Since the Japanese War the army reorganisation had proceeded apace. There were huge spaces to cover; but if Russia should ever, by an excellent railway system, overcome this handicap and mobilise at a speed even remotely approaching that of Germany, the latter's dreams of world power would perish suddenly, and her whole policy would have to be modified. Remembering that on her south-western frontiers was France with the unforgettable humiliation of 1870 ever present in her mind, the reason of Germany's "nerves" becomes clear.

The populations of the belligerent nations were as follows:—

Germany (1910)	. . . . .	64,925,993
Austria-Hungary (1910).	. . . . .	49,211,427
Russia (1910)	. . . . .	166,107,700



United Kingdom (1911) . . . . .	45,365,599
France (1911) . . . . .	39,601,509
Belgium (1910) . . . . .	7,423,784
Servia (1910) . . . . .	2,911,701

In the final resort numbers must tell, and the numbers here represent the ratio of allied peoples to the Germanic alliance as 26 to 11. In the face of such numbers Germany's chance of victory, once Italy stood aside and Belgium resisted, must have seemed small indeed, even to the most sanguine of the Kaiser's generals. We have taken no account of the British *Empire*, nor of the resources of the Empire.

The actual armies of the nations at war can be given with sufficient exactitude to form some valid estimate of the forces involved. With the exception of Germany, however, none of the nations had reckoned upon having to put her full armed strength into the field. The time of service with the colours varied from two to three years for the various conscript armies; it varied between two and three years, according to the arm, even in the German army. The whole period of liability to serve ranged roughly in the different armies between twenty and forty-five years of age. All the armies were organised to form so many corps, each consisting of two divisions of approximately 20,000 men each. On a war footing some armies took in a third division, which would increase the normal strength of a corps from 40,000 to 60,000 men. A British army corps was perhaps 10 per cent. smaller than a Continental army corps. An army corps is not only a unit of an army; it is an army in itself, with its full complement of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, engineers, medical attendants, airmen, etc.

At the outbreak of war the strongest first-line army was, both on paper and in fact, the German. For immediate service in the field it could muster about two and a half millions of splendidly trained men. Of men of some sort of training it could probably call to the colours another army of about the same strength, and its total available fighting strength would include yet another army of about the same size. There were, in fine, some seven or seven and a half million men available for active service, though of these two and a half millions would have had no training; and, of course, not all this huge number could take the field at once. If there were arms for two-thirds, that is a very generous estimate. The German Staff alone knew for how many full equipment was provided, and of what value the last two and a half million would be.

France had a first-line army on paper of some two million men, but it is difficult to speak with accuracy with regard to the precise numbers. When, in 1912, Germany raised the peace strength of her army to 866,000 men as an offset to increases in the Russian army, France, which was already accepting almost the full number of recruits annually presenting themselves, had to increase her army by retaining her conscripts with the colours for an extra year, making the period of service three years. Germany, even on the new basis, only took about half of her annual complement of recruits. Whether the three years' service had been sufficiently long in force to give France any benefit is open to grave doubt. The total number of trained men in France was about four millions, and no troops have ever excelled the fire and dash of the typical French soldier.

The Russian army could put in the field between two and two and a half millions of first-line troops. But the Russian war strength might be anything up to five

and a half million men, and behind these there were millions more. But for how many of these Russia could provide equipment the General Staff alone knew. It is certain that, with her poor railway system, it must have been a grave difficulty to maintain even her first line in the field. But no one could hope to conquer Russia while she wished to fight, and her army had had the great advantage of recent service in another war. Her generals were not working by manœuvres in this war; they had proved their worth in the field. Russia had been called the "steam roller" because of the slowness but terrible completeness of her crushing power. But the most conspicuous thing in the Russo-German and Russo-Austrian conflict was Russia's masterly strategy. The steam-roller simile certainly needed qualification.

Austria-Hungary had the smallest army of these four conscript nations. Its peace strength amounted to some half a million men; but on a war footing about 1,200,000 men could be put into the field, and behind them were some two million men with training sufficient to act as reserves.\*

These huge bodies of men were not only not required in the field at one time, they could not be manœuvred even on the extraordinary drawn-out battle lines which have become familiar in this war. They were, however, an account which could be drawn upon at need to make good the wastage of war, to hold lines of communication, garrison fortresses or conquered territory. Not all were of the highest practical value in the field where there was any chance of their having to meet first-line troops of the enemy.

The British Expeditionary Force comprised some 150,000 men; but there were available in addition 300,000 trained men, without drawing upon the Territorial army of some 250,000 men, or the native Indian army—some 70,000 of whom took the field in the early part of the war—or volunteer troops from the self-governing dominions. These last-mentioned were not mere volunteer recruits, but included men who had already received training, some that most valuable of all training, actual service in the field. The Expeditionary Force was composed of troops trained to the highest pitch of efficiency. Brave, cool, hardened and set by service in many countries; gay, light-hearted, with plenty of nerve but no nerves, they formed an almost ideal army, which soon showed its mettle to some purpose. Of men physically fit and willing to bear arms in case of necessity the British Empire has a supply which it is not fatuous to call inexhaustible.

The Servian army was composed of men who had been through two hard campaigns in recent years, and although the readjustments since the Balkan War had not yet enabled it to make use of its full strength, it could put into the field some 300,000 men, who must be reckoned equal to the best troops in Europe.

The Belgian army was in the throes of a transition when war broke out. In 1912 Belgium doubled her army, and the complete force on reorganisation should have been about 350,000 men—150,000 to form the field army, about the same number to garrison the fortresses, and the remainder reserve.

The navies of the belligerents are more easily described. We have seen that the waging of war formed a deliberate part of German policy. The open and confessed aim of her rulers was expansion, and expansion at the expense of another Power. The warlike speeches of the Kaiser and Chancellor and the favour shown to the army, with its powerful organisation, are all evidence of this fact. But in

\* In extremity it must be remembered that the numbers possible to put into the field by any country depends almost entirely upon its power of organisation, the power of embodying all the fit males.



nothing is it so clearly proved as in the growth of the German navy. It might readily be admitted that Germany required a large and powerful army for self-defence, but it is the flimsiest fiction to pretend she required a huge navy, unless she contemplated war against Great Britain. If the adequate defence of her commerce was her objective, that could only be secured by creating a navy *larger than that of Great Britain*. Yet from the accession of Admiral von Tirpitz to power in 1898, as an inconspicuous and insignificant naval officer, the German navy continued to grow by leaps and bounds, until it became a direct menace to the British navy, which corresponded to the army in Germany in being the chief bulwark against foreign aggression. In 1898 the fleet was fixed at 19 battleships. This was increased by the Navy Law of 1900, which was changed in 1906, 1909, and in 1912. At the outbreak of war the total strength of the German navy was 37 battleships (13 being Dreadnoughts) and battle cruisers (three additional Dreadnoughts were almost completed), 39 light cruisers, 142 destroyers, 47 torpedo boats, and at least 30, but probably more, submarines, with a naval air complement. The later battleships and battle cruisers were all equal to corresponding battleships of the same date in other navies.

The British Government, seeing the naval supremacy challenged upon which the security of its communication with the overseas dominions, the security of its world-wide trade, and, indeed, the safeguard of its own life and liberty depended, was driven to even greater and greater sacrifices to maintain a sufficient margin of safety over the constantly increasing might of its neighbour across the North Sea. The German navy had to guard but two small strips of coastline, if only defence was its object, whereas the British navy had to guard the whole of the coastline of Great Britain and Ireland, and that also of all the overseas dominions. The British navy was organised in three fleets. The first fleet comprised four battle squadrons and the flagship of the Commander-in-Chief. The first battle squadron consisted of eight Dreadnought and super-Dreadnought battleships, one of which, the *Marlborough*, mounted ten 13.5-in. guns, the others having the same number of 12-in. guns. The second battle squadron consisted of 8 super-Dreadnoughts with 13.5-in. guns; the third of 8 pre-Dreadnought battleships with only four 12-in. guns; and the fourth of 4 battleships, one of the pre-Dreadnought era. Attached to the first fleet also were five cruiser squadrons, four flotillas of destroyers, and six mine-sweeping gun-boats. In all the first fleet comprised 28 battleships (19 of them being Dreadnoughts or super-Dreadnoughts), 23 cruisers (four mounting eight 13.5-in. guns apiece), 75 destroyers, and 6 mine-sweepers. The second and third fleets contained 25 battleships, 69 cruisers, 61 destroyers, 42 submarines, 11 torpedo boats, and 7 mine-layers. These were only the fleets for home defence. Other powerful fleets were stationed in the Mediterranean and abroad. And besides all this the fleets had behind them the splendid traditions of the British navy. The ships were manned by men who loved the sea and lived in the service. This was really a greater asset than the addition of many battleships would have been to the enemy.

The French navy was a sufficiently formidable array by itself, and, when added to the British, made the allied naval forces adequate to the rôle they were destined to fill. It consisted of 23 battleships (10 being Dreadnoughts), 32 cruisers, 80 destroyers, 140 torpedo boats, and between 50 and 60 submarines of the latest type.

Unfortunately the outbreak of war occurred too soon after the Russian Naval Bill of 1912 to find the Russian navy in the state it was meant to be in for war service. The fleet was disposed in two parts, one in the Baltic, with two-thirds of

the naval strength, the other in the Black Sea. The latter was of little consequence from the nature of the case, though it played a by no means unimportant rôle after the outbreak of war with Turkey. The Baltic fleet consisted of 4 Dreadnoughts, 12 cruisers, 80 destroyers, and 25 submarines. This was a very slight fleet to oppose to the imposing force of Germany, which by means of the Kiel Canal could with ease pass its whole strength into the Baltic. But it was a very disturbing factor for Germany, since it detained a considerable portion of the German fleet, and therefore prevented the latter issuing in full force against the British fleet.

Considerable increases had been made in recent years in the Austro-Hungarian navy, but at the outbreak of war it was not able to oppose any significant force to the British and French ships free to patrol the Mediterranean. Of its 16 battleships only 4 were Dreadnoughts, and several of an old type. There were 11 cruisers (and 3 nearly ready to commission), 15 destroyers, 60 torpedo boats, and 6 submarines.

Yet it must be borne in mind that these figures represent the state of things only *in general*. The Grand Fleet was in many respects inferior to the German High Seas Fleet which it had to meet in the North Sea. If we represent its superiority by a + sign and inferiority by a - sign it had, at the outbreak of war, +7 Dreadnoughts, -8 Pre-Dreadnoughts, +1 Battle Cruiser, -3 Light Cruisers, and -46 Destroyers. But it seems sufficiently clear that the Germans were as ignorant of the true balance of forces as the British public and, so far as we know, not once during the war did they *deliberately* challenge a pitched battle.

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The mind behind war before the troops come into contact, the strategy on land and sea, differs in the different nations. Both the German and French armies preferred to maintain and push a vigorous offensive; but the very distinct differences in the interpretation of this term appeared almost at the outset of the war. Germany played like a gambler; France played with caution. Germany hurled her men on with such impetuosity that it was certain many must fall. She risked the sacrifice of thousands on the chance of breaking or tearing the line of her enemy's army.

She believed that no fortress could hold out if attacked with sufficient vigour and assaulted with heavy artillery. The *métier* of fortresses is not, of course, to impose a final barrier to the enemy, but rather to give him check, to delay his advance. But even in this sense the French view proved unsound and the German valid, though not so true as she thought. And in her own view time was everything.

Time is indeed the deciding point in warfare, for it is the means of multiplying the strength of an army. No matter how large an army, if it can be met in pieces by the whole force of the enemy, it is possible to beat it as each section arrives. It becomes the strategical problem of every general so to manipulate his forces that, at a given moment on the point he selects for attack, he may oppose superior numbers to his enemy.

The problem of the German army in the war was to fight two enemies on land and three on sea. Her land enemies could be conceived as two, for they were massed in but two places—on the east, a line extending from the Baltic to the Carpathian Mountains; and, in the west, on a line stretching from the Belgian-French sea-coast to the Swiss frontier. One of these enemies was assumed to be slow, the other much more rapid, in mobilising.

Germany's plan was to leave a few army corps on the Russo-German frontier, and with the flower of her army to march through Belgium in several columns, and



through the gap between the fortresses of Epinal and Toul, to take France before she was completely mobilised, throw the troops into disorder, advance upon Paris, mask every fortress in the way, crush every army which resisted, take Paris, and, if the French resistance had not been completely crushed by that time, to seek out each and every army and smash it as soon as it was met. Then, having "beaten France to the knees," she would turn round, rush the armies to the Russo-German frontier, leaving slight and comparatively inferior forces to hold France, and deal Russia a series of sufficiently heavy blows to make her sue for peace. While Germany was crushing France, Austria was to keep Russia occupied by making an incursion into Russian Poland.

It was a bold plan. Everything depended upon time. If Germany could have been upon France before her forces were mobilised she might have thrown the whole machine out of gear. That was her hope. Belgium, of course, would not be so stupid as to show more than a nominal resistance. The double envelopment through Belgium and through Lorraine would catch the French armies in a trap. Everything had been thought out to the minutest detail. Troops were over the French and Luxemburg frontiers on 2nd August, and before Liège on 4th August. Huge siege guns, built secretly and hidden away in Krupps' yards, had been prepared to batter down the walls of fortresses. There were nine or ten Zeppelins ready to reconnoitre, drop huge quantities of explosives, and intimidate generally. Numbers of scouting aeroplanes had been built, air-guns had been devised, and every factor which might turn the tide to victory had been pressed into service.

Every factor except insight. The whole plan, bold and imposing as it was on paper, collapsed \* when put to the test of practice. The German theoreticians had forgotten that war is not a game of chess. The chessmen were living, human beings, and a little more attention to the motives which move men would have saved the Germans many bitter experiences. If Belgium resisted for a few days only, the French would have time to complete their mobilisation. The German troops had to be in France before 15th August to interrupt the French concentration. Whether Belgium would or could resist until then seems to have been the one detail to which the Germans had not attended. Belgium would not resist; England would not fight—all was well.

It is not a mentality one can respect or admire. It resembles nothing so much as the temperament of children who possess the supreme gift of seeing what they wish to see; and the German temperament is childish in other ways. As early as 25th July mobs paraded the Linden (Berlin) and demonstrated before the Austrian Embassy. Servians and Russians were insulted. During the early days of the next week, when diplomacy was at work in every capital in Europe, the same war fever persisted. When the declarations of war became known, the scenes were extraordinary. Ladies from the Russian Embassy were insulted, and competent witnesses state that the police stood passively by.

People throughout Germany lost their heads. There was a run on the banks, which increased from 25th July. Paper money became worthless. Food rose to huge prices, so that the police had to close shops which had put up their charges. As early as 30th July a special edition of the *Lokalanzeiger* announced the mobilisation of the German forces. The news had to be contradicted; but the fact that it

\* Except as regards Russia, where intrigue and treachery sowed revolution in the country, and at length destroyed her armies.

was published shows the state of the public mind. After the mobilisation had been ordered, the Kaiser addressed a crowd from the balcony in the palace. "We shall show our foes what it means to provoke Germany," he ended. On 31st July the mob went mad with "spy fever," and attacked every one whom it had the slightest reason to suspect.

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On 4th August, although the British ultimatum did not expire until midnight, the news that Great Britain had declared war was published in the papers some time before; indeed, it was only shortly after 9.30 P.M. that the news appeared. At once an extraordinary fury seized upon the Berlin mob, and an attempt was made to wreck and sack the British Embassy. The police were overpowered. Huge stones were hurled into the drawing-room where the Ambassador and his family were sitting. In response, however, to a telephone message to the Foreign Office, mounted police were sent, and the street was cleared. The popular fictions about Great Britain which the German diplomatists had persuaded themselves to believe had been circulated sedulously. She could not and would not go to war. When the ultimatum was delivered it had, therefore, all the appearance of treachery, and Englishmen were subjected to intolerable insults.

The French fared little better, and for the extraordinary discourtesies to the French and Russian Ambassadors and their staffs the Government must be held officially responsible.

Men and women danced out of cafés into the streets of Berlin wild with delight that the great moment had at length come. Almost every one lost his head, and a sober clergyman voiced the feeling of the moment in the words, "How wonderful are these days." A newspaper spoke of the "fresh merriness" of war, and, indeed, that is how it seemed to the majority of Germans.

On the morning of 5th August the Kaiser sent one of his aides-de-camp to the British Ambassador to express the Emperor's regret for the occurrences of the previous evening. At the same time, he was told to point out that from such actions the Ambassador might gather an idea of the feelings of his people with regard to the action of Great Britain in joining other nations against her old allies of Waterloo. If this were an imaginative story, such a statement would be stigmatised as a mere *jeu d'esprit*. As it is taken from the report of the British Ambassador, one can only marvel at the extraordinary temperament it reveals. A further ungracious action the Kaiser could not resist: "His Majesty also begs that you will tell the King that he has been proud of the titles of British Field-Marshal and British Admiral, but that, in consequence of what has occurred, he must now at once divest himself of those titles."

It is gratifying to remember that the heads of the allied Governments comported themselves with perfect propriety and dignity at this time. The Ambassadors were treated with perfect courtesy, and every arrangement was made for their comfort on the journey to their own countries.

The amazing display of anger on the part of the German people was, in fact, but an earnest of their conduct during the war. It seems as though, while other nations were becoming civilised and cultivated, Germans were merely studying and using civilisation and Kultur, and when the time came they simply threw aside both as worn-out and unsuitable weapons, and became, at a bound, primitive man. Certainly the course of the war lends ample colour to the suggestion.



## PART II.

### THE OPEN WAR.

#### INTRODUCTION.

THE war fell logically into two periods. There was first the comparatively short phase of open warfare with which all wars must begin and end, and then followed the long-drawn-out warfare of positions and siege war. As soon as the first phase passed into the second, Germany and her allies were doomed, since the resources of the Entente Powers were so much greater though much less available at the outset.

It is for this reason that the Battle of the Marne is rightly regarded as one of the decisive battles of the world. With its corollary, the Battle of Flanders, the Battle of the Marne ended the open war with its swift movements and great hazards on the Western or main front. While the Allies held together and remained resolute in their will to victory there could be no chance for Germany. The war had become a true siege. The great lines which surrounded the beleaguered fortress might be pushed out without detriment to the pressure of the siege. The nature of a siege is such that the besieged must grow continually weaker relatively to the besieger. The forces of the latter must grow relatively and absolutely while those of the besieged wane.

But for a true siege, in the military sense, it was necessary that the Allies' sea power should be exerted to its full extent. In a land siege *nothing* can reach the army which is penned into some position, and the siege of Germany could not be made to resemble a land siege until the Allied navies were allowed to exert their full pressure. At first only absolute contraband was forbidden entrance into Germany; but when the Germans swept away every difference which marked off the civilian from the soldier, and moreover began, in February 1915, an illegal blockade of Great Britain by means of submarines, the Allies had to revise their plans. On 1st March it was announced that the difference between absolute and conditional contraband was to be swept away and that nothing would be allowed to enter Germany.

It is true that for some time later food and numerous commodities found their way to Germany through neutral countries, and it was not until a few months before the end of the war that the imports of neutrals were sufficiently controlled to prevent any food leaking through. Yet, in spite of this, the siege war in its full sense began on March 1, 1915, and the struggle entered upon a new phase.

In the open warfare Germany had laid all her plans to secure a decision. She meant to put her opponent out of action either by capturing or killing some great part of his armies, or by destroying them as an organised force. Her pre-war training had been deliberately designed to secure the maximum of mobility in order that the war might be short and decisive. Her strategy similarly aimed at a rapid

decision. She marched through Belgium for this purpose, since without that gateway into France she could not sufficiently exploit her armies and their mobility. To throw such huge forces against the fortress barrier of France or against the gap of Charmes (between the forts of Toul and Epinal) would be to waste them. The forts would probably check the armies for some time, and in any case an issue through the gap of Charmes alone would be perilous. Combined with the main assault through Belgium, such an attack past Charmes would threaten to surround the French armies completely, and each would ensure the success of the other. Fearing the attack through Belgium, the Allies might be expected to weaken on the east and *vice versa*. On the other hand, German critics now admit that Schlieffen's grandiose plan was radically unsound. The troops who wasted themselves in dashing against the French eastern frontier might, if thrown into the scale on the western flank have gained a decision.

Yet it is worthy of note that fate treated Germany, on this as on other occasions, with deadly irony. The attack through Belgium, designed to secure a speedy decision, brought into the field Great Britain, the one Power which could drag out the war indefinitely. And in the second part of this first phase of the war this fact began to be realised. Admiral von Tirpitz was perfectly correct in seeing that unless Britain's sea power could be broken the position of Germany was desperate. His mistake was that he chose a weapon which might not secure the end in view, and being inhuman and illegal, must involve other Powers and further ensure a long war.

The terrible effects of the pressure of sea power will not be fully realised for some years, until the veil is lifted from the experiences of Germany and her partners. The unfortunate logic of the German temperament emphasized the pressure, since the militarists scientifically put the whole nation with all its resources under control. Without military operations, the blockade would have mattered little. With *limited* military operations it would not have crushed the lives of the people. But when cotton (for clothing) and nitrates (and other fertilisers) were shot from the guns as explosives; when labour, badly needed to produce more food to replace the lost imports, was drafted into munition works; when copper, petrol, rubber, etc., were used for the war, only the bare skeleton of modern life remained.

The military operations of this opening period were at first distinctly amateurish. Joffre's essay into Alsace and later into Alsace-Lorraine was not well conducted, and generals had to be warned that artillery was to be used in intelligent preparation before flinging men at entrenched positions. Until the days of Charleroi and Mons Joffre's concentration was most dense on the eastern frontier, where, despite his superiority in numbers,\* his offensives in Lorraine and the Ardennes failed, and all went wrong until the battle of Nancy, where the French first showed their mettle. On the Sambre, again, the French armies were not handled with that confidence which marked the fighting even a few weeks later.

But the Germans were just as maladroit. Bülow's and Kluck's armies could have annihilated the armies opposed to them if they had struck simultaneously; Bülow and Hausen could have captured Lanrezac. On the Marne they were out-generalled and out-fought; and Kluck's only excuse for his failure to hold Maunoury's 6th French Army was that he had every right to expect that it would behave as other garrison armies, and, being allocated to Gallieni for Paris, would not act on

\* The Germans had 39 per cent. of their forces on the Sambre and Meuse front against 25 per cent. of the French army.



the offensive ! They allowed the Antwerp garrison to slip away, and only woke to the importance of the Channel coast when the chance of seizing and holding it had passed.

The Russians surprised most spectators by their chivalrous advance in East Prussia, which resulted in the 11th and Guard Reserve Corps being transferred to the Eastern front before the Battle of the Marne and the allocation of reserves critically needed on the Western front. The Galicia campaign was a brilliant success, and in the exchanges on the East Prussia front there was a surprising equality. The victory of Tannenberg was wiped out at Augustowo, that of Kovno at Lodz ; and to the end of this first period the Russian generals had shown themselves quite equal to their opponents in strategy, though the Staff work and reconnaissance were markedly inferior.

Before the first phase closed the war had spread to Turkey, to Africa, to China, and over the outer seas. The German navy had cast law, custom, and humanity to the winds in the attack on English coastal towns, but had challenged some of the distant naval dispositions very creditably. Vistas opened out. No one saw that the war would last as long as it did, though Lord Kitchener, with sure insight, thought it would continue three years on military grounds. But the splendid defence at Ypres and the supremacy of the Allied sea power had gained for the Allies a respite. When conversations had taken place between the French and British Staffs a few years before as to the military contribution of Britain if she should be engaged in a European war on the side of France, the French Staff only asked for 160,000 to 200,000 troops. Some forty times as many were called up before the end.

The Germans succeeded in one part of their grand strategy. They did compel Russia to come to terms. But the victory so greatly assisted by treachery failed to give the Germans the expected results. Russia was deliberately allowed to become disorganised, and when the Revolution came the disorganisation grew apace. It was therefore impossible to extort any appreciable quantity of supplies from the East, and the stringency of the Allied siege was not mitigated.

But there was a gain in military force, and by means of it the Allies on the West were brought near to disaster in the spring of 1918. They were saved by America taking the place of Russia and by the adoption of Foch as Commander-in-Chief. This expedient would not have been necessary if the Allies had co-operated faithfully and fully ; but under the circumstances the change meant all the difference. The one great outstanding figure of the war began to emerge from the comparative obscurity of a corps command in the first month of the war. His great virtue was his resolution. An accomplished master of war, versatile and rapid in his decisions, his greatest power was an unconquerable will. It is in the region of will rather than of intellect war is begun and decided, and where ninety-nine generals out of a hundred would have given up, Foch stood cheerfully calm in the midst of disasters.

## BOOK I.

### THE FIRST WESTERN OFFENSIVE.

#### I. THE BELGIAN PRELUDE.

"The fact of a neutral Power resisting even by force attempts to violate its neutrality cannot be regarded as a hostile act."—[Art. 10. The Hague Convention, 1907, on the rights and duties of neutrals.]

"Belgium was thus bound in honour to defend her own independence. She kept her oath. The other Powers were bound to respect and to protect her neutrality. Germany violated her oath; England kept hers. These are the facts."—[Cardinal Mercier's letter to his people, Christmas, 1914.]

ACCORDING to the plan outlined in the last chapter, Germany had defied one enemy who is completely irreconcilable, who cannot be cajoled or bribed or intimidated, who never forgets or forgives, or fails to take vengeance for a mistake. That enemy was *time*. Everything had to be done exactly to the schedule or the plan collapsed. If she were late, the Russian forces gathering in the East might overrun Eastern Prussia or even strike at the heart of industrial Germany, Silesia.

France had guarded the Lorraine-Alsatian frontier by a huge fortress barrier, which would delay or seriously weaken the German armies until the French concentration was completed. Further, the vast armies of Germany would be thrown away in such an attack. To use such armies to advantage the huge marching columns must have space in which to deploy. A study of the map of Northern France will show what a splendid field is provided for the columns issuing from Belgium to open out for their descent upon Paris by the shortest and easiest road. So Germany blithely resolved to march through Belgium.

The "cockpit of Europe" is a country like no other. A little less than twice the area of Yorkshire, though it has nearly four times the population, no country has such a history of battles and bloodshed, a history which begins with one of the fiercest of Cæsar's campaigns. For centuries the wars of Europe were waged here. Marlborough's fame was won here; and here, too, the seal was set upon Wellington's career. Belgium became a separate State, with its neutrality guaranteed for ever, as an additional check upon war, by the Great Powers, in 1831 and 1839.

The Belgians are not one race. The Flemings, who dwell in the Belgian plain between the sea and the Meuse, cool, stolid, undemonstrative, tend to resemble the Germans; the Walloons, who inhabit the industrial regions of the east and south, are quick, fiery, passionate, and resemble the French.

Early in the morning of Tuesday, 4th August, a body of troops belonging to the 34th Infantry Brigade in their new grey-green uniforms crossed the Belgian frontier at Gemmenich, which lies in the angle of the frontier where the Dutch, German, and Belgian boundaries meet, between four and five miles from Aix-la-Chapelle. The



first troops marched along the road towards the Meuse. The pretty little town of Visé lies on the eastern bank of the Meuse at the point where the road crosses it, and the Germans meant to occupy the town at the end of the first day's march, as a preliminary to the assault upon Liége, the northern forts of which command the town. A small force of Belgian cavalry went out to meet the Germans, but were driven back; and the Belgians blew up the bridge, and for three hours the little force under Major Collijns, defended the town.

Then a first sample of German methods was given. The fiery Walloons had tried to defend their homes in every way possible, and the Germans determined to exact revenge. All who were found with arms in their hands were shot. The town was later burned to the ground. It has now been established that this was done deliberately, and the Germans had thus shown clearly the methods they meant to employ against all who resisted them, unless they were soldiers. The fighting had been fierce in spite of its short duration, and the northern Liége forts had proved their efficiency by smashing with a few shells the boat bridge which the German sappers had flung across the Meuse. An attempt with pontoons was no more successful. Bridge after bridge was thus destroyed. Visé occupied and subdued, the troops advanced towards Liége. Meanwhile troops of the 14th Infantry Brigade were marching in the direct road for Aix to Liége, and from the 11th were approaching the fortress *via* Verviers.

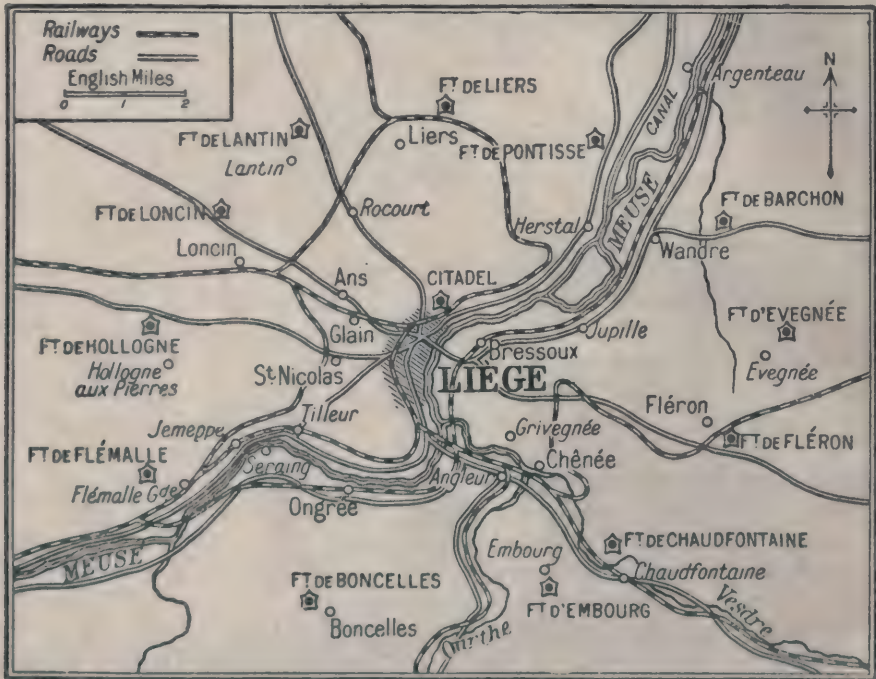
It is customary to call Liége the "Birmingham of Belgium," but it is better described as the Belgian Birmingham. It is the interpretation of Birmingham in Belgian terms. The capital of the Walloons, Liége, has long been famous as a maker of small arms, but it has also a wide reputation for its zinc works and cycle and engine factories. Its collieries were the first to be worked on the Continent, and they include some of the deepest sunk shafts in the world. But, although huge chimneys are to be seen everywhere and a pall of smoke covered the city, Liége had taken root among lovely wooded country, and its spacious streets, with numerous fine buildings, parks, and gardens, presented a scene of comeliness and peace strangely at variance with its troubled history and stranger destiny.

Belgium was not wholly unprepared for the German onslaught, and Liége was the first corner-stone of its defence against invasion. It lies on the railway from Aix-la-Chapelle, some 25 miles distant. The fortress of Liége is a fair representation of a definite military theory. Adequately garrisoned, it was thought capable of holding out indefinitely. A "ring fortress," its twelve forts were disposed round the city at an average distance of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and at an average distance of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles apart. As a consequence, no one fort could be attacked without drawing the fire of at least two others which supported it. Tunnels and covered ways protected the forts, which were all on high ground. The fortifications were designed in 1886 by a famous military engineer, General Brialmont. The guns were placed in armoured domed turrets, so mounted that the cupola would sink under cover after the gun had been fired, and remain there until it was ready to be fired again. Lord Sydenham, at the time Sir George Clarke, criticised the fortification plans of Brialmont. He held that the cupolas offered an obvious target, were liable to be put out of gear, and were open to the grave handicap of immobility in an attack by heavy siege guns. Invisible movable guns in covered trenches were nearer his ideal, and the course of the war has proved to the full the wisdom of these criticisms.

But Liége provided many surprises for the Germans and covered itself with

glory, so that it seemed a fitting thing when the French, in a characteristically graceful act, conferred the Legion of Honour upon the town on 7th August.

On the evening of 4th August the defenders of Liège saw a motor car containing a German officer wearing an overcoat of white serge and with blindfolded eyes drive through their midst. The fortress was summoned to surrender, and at once refused. It was inadequately garrisoned by the 3rd Division and the 15th Mixed Brigade, some 20,000 men, and the attack was opened on the following day by the 27th and 14th Infantry Brigades, which, with the 34th, 11th, 43rd, and 38th, were under the command of General von Emmich. This general, who had seen service in the Franco-Prussian War, was the commander of the 10th Army Corps; but he had been put in charge of the little force which was to open the indispensable door of



The Fortress of Liège.

Liège. The corps to which they belonged would have amounted to between 120,000 and 130,000 men. In actual fact there were but six infantry brigades, with a cavalry squadron, field artillery brigade, engineers and cyclists attached to each of them. There were probably only about 30,000 infantry, as the plan was to seize the fortress by a *coup de main*. With the troops went General von Ludendorff to co-ordinate General Emmich's operations with those of General von Bülow.

The northern forts had already been engaged at long range, but the German artillery was too light to make much impression upon the armoured turrets. The Germans, not expecting any serious resistance, had brought no siege artillery. The heaviest armament of the forts was their two 6-inch guns and two 8-inch mortars. At night, however, the attack began in earnest. The 14th Brigade, attacking between the Meuse and the Vesdre, advanced against Fort de Fléron and Fort d'Eveg-



née, which stand at the foot of rising ground, not quite three thousand yards apart. The next fort, to the south of Fléron, is over three miles distant, and the country is wooded. This, while it made the approach to Fléron somewhat difficult, offered at the same time a certain amount of cover ; and, if modern forts could be rushed, this was probably the best to attack. The two forts were shelled heavily but without effect, and the infantry, advancing in close formation, were literally mowed down, under the glare of searchlights, by the guns of the forts, field artillery, machine guns, and rifles from the trenches. Line after line pressed on, to be cut down in the same wholesale fashion, until at length, reeling from the fierceness of the onslaught, the shattered lines were hurled back by dashing bayonet charges.

The first taste of the spirit of the Liégeois cannot have been encouraging. A duel between the guns of the forts and the German field guns preluded the return to the attack on the following day, and the 11th (south of the Vesdre), and later the 34th Brigade (across the Meuse), were added to the troops already engaged. Still the same grim tactics held sway, and they might have gone on for weeks, in the absence of heavy siege artillery, if the force within Liège had been sufficient to man the trenches adequately : for the whole German effort was aimed at breaking through the spaces between the forts.

The renewed attack was, however, more astutely delivered during this and the following day. The attack in the centre was conducted by the 14th Brigade, of which Ludendorff himself took command when it was reeling back from its first assault. The general and officer in command of the assaulting regiment had already been killed. The German forces now extended the range of their assault to include Fort de Barchon, and from across the river bombarded Fort de Pontisse, the northernmost fort of the ring. At the same time an attack was made upon the spaces between the southernmost forts—Flémalle, Bonnelles, Embourg—as well as in the quarter where the original assault had been made. General Leman, the heroic defender of Liège, a cool and determined fighter, who had been formerly a lecturer at the Military School, was now confronted with the task of defending the seven intervals threatened against an assault which totalled about 30,000 men. Yet, in spite of the inadequate force at his disposal, the Germans fared little better, though part of the 14th Brigade, under Ludendorff's direction, wandered through the circuit of forts.

On Thursday, 6th August, the Germans demanded the surrender of the town and the forts. It was refused, and the enemy then began a heavy bombardment of the town of Liège which lasted for several hours, without, it must be said, doing any significant damage. In the early morning Fort Fléron was silenced, the machinery of the disappearing turret being smashed, and the Germans began to filter into Liège between Fort Barchon and the Meuse, and between Fléron and d'Evegnée. An exciting and suggestive incident also occurred this morning. Two German Uhlans managed to enter the town, and, by the help of spies, penetrated to the headquarters of General Leman. Their identity was discovered only in the nick of time, and Captain Marchand saved his commander by shutting the door which led to General Leman's office. He was shot, his dead body falling by the side of Major von Alvensleben, who had led the German detachment ; but the General was lifted over a wall at the back of the house by another officer, and escaped. The Uhlans were killed. It was about this time that the Belgian force began to leave the town, and General Leman agreed with the mayor to surrender the town,

but not the forts. So Liège surrendered, and Liège still held out. The Germans marched into the town, but the bombardment of the forts still continued, and the casualties had been so terrible that General von Emmich on the next day asked for an armistice to collect the wounded and bury the dead.

The commandant of the forts refused the request. General Leman had little trust in the Germans. When on Friday, 7th August, the "Fall of Liège" was made known in Berlin, people went wild with joy. But Liège had not fallen as a fortress; and, while the frenzied rejoicing was taking place in Berlin, the German commander was demanding leave to bury his dead. The forts still commanded road, rail, and river, and continued to do so for some time. Isolated and invested, the forts held out splendidly until the arrival of the heavy siege artillery, which had until then been Krupps' and the German Staff secret. Drawn by its dozen traction engines, each of the heaviest guns was conveyed to its destination in four pieces, with its detail of three steam-rollers. Krupps had taken the precaution of not delivering the new and heavier guns which had been ordered for the Liège forts, or the gallant defence might have continued much longer.

On 9th August the forts were completely invested. The crossings of the Meuse at Visé and Huy had been seized, but the forts could not be left, as they commanded the main line of communications into France. They had to be reduced. Three days later the German Staff had taken up its residence in the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and a general assault on the forts began, and continued until the morning of the next day. Yet on the 14th most of the western forts were still intact.

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Life in Liège during these recurrent assaults was lived on a strange plane. Artillery in the city bombarded the forts almost incessantly. The shells whistled shrilly overhead, but attracted little attention. The magnificent bridge, the Pont des Arches, had been blown up by the Belgians, although they had left intact the railway bridge, the Pont du Val. Cafés and shops were turned into hospitals, and one might be eating a frugal meal, forgetful of all that had occurred, except for the continual passing of German soldiery, when a moan from some room near at hand would recall the actualities of the situation. During the night frequent attacks were made upon the forts by infantry, who approached with the utmost daring.

Even up to the 15th some of the western forts forbade all attempts to bridge the river; but at length the heavy siege artillery was laboriously brought up, and on that day all the forts—the ruins, rather, which remained—were in the hands of the Germans. General Leman was dragged, unconscious, half-asphyxiated, and crushed, from beneath a huge beam in Fort Loncin, which from the west of the town commanded the railway to Louvain and Brussels. He had been on the point of leaving, although he had already been badly crushed, for one of the forts had not yet fallen. Everything had been destroyed which could be of value to the enemy—maps, plans, guns, and shells. The fort was already in ruins, but the soldier's one regret was that he had been taken alive. His only desire was that it should be put on record that he was unconscious when taken. He was received with all courtesy, and General von Emmich refused to take the sword of so gallant an enemy. In a touching letter to the King of the Belgians he reiterated that he was taken only when unconscious. "I have not surrendered either the fortress or the forts. . . . Death was denied me."

A touch of burlesque is given to this story of heroism by the German pretension



that the forts were not taken before because of the Kaiser's reluctance to sacrifice the lives they would have cost. And the reason for this cost of life was naïvely given as the marked numerical superiority of the Belgian defence force. As a matter of fact, the defence force was a mixed garrison rushed up with the greatest haste, and it was at most not two-thirds of the army which conducted the attack.

General Leman and his splendid soldiers have won imperishable fame. All the Allies were quick to acclaim it. But the men of Liège did much more than that. In this great war which was waged for freedom against the claims of a military despotism, their resistance was of almost incalculable value to the Allies. The triumphant deployment of the Kaiser's armies before the French mobilisation was completed was rendered impossible. Long before the Germans had crossed the Belgian plain into France, French troops were ready and in Belgium. They accomplished yet another thing: they proved to the world that the German soldiers' invincibility, so proudly and arrogantly advertised, was a fiction of the German Staff.

Incidentally the resistance of the Liège fortress proved that the German theory that it is possible to rush a ring fortress is unsound if the defensive force is adequate and suitably entrenched. It was only when the small force had to be distributed over the whole perimeter of the ring that General Leman saw he could not hold the town as distinct from the individual forts. But at the same time it proved that ring fortresses are not the invincible defences they were claimed to be, in face of the heaviest artillery. A fort gives odds to siege artillery. Even where the calibre of the guns is the same, fortress artillery being immobile, can be ranged with ease, and can be brought under the concentrated fire of any number of guns whose site may be almost impossible to discover.

When the last forts of Liège had been battered to dust a great part of Belgium had been overrun by the German troops. On 9th August a detachment of the Death's Head Hussars had penetrated to Tongres, some five miles north-west of Liège. By the 10th cavalry were flowing westward in the direction of Tirlemont, where part of the Belgian field army lay. With the utmost intrepidity small patrols would enter town and village. Frequently they were attacked and put to flight, but still the irresistible wave flowed on. Sometimes they were shot at by villagers. Even civilians armed with revolvers took part in defending their towns.

As early as 9th August a statement was issued in Berlin threatening that if there were a continuance of such tactics the Allies would be held responsible "if the war is extended with inexorable strength to the guilty population." The "inexorable strength" had been applied, in many places, some days before the proclamation. It was in evidence at Visé and in the town of Liège; but before long the face of the countryside felt the iron hand even more ruthlessly. In the German official pronouncement the natural and spontaneous resistance of the people \* to the ruin of their homes was described as a "*franc-tireur*" war. The *Franc-tireurs* were irregular troops, although the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War shot them as non-combatants. With a similar liberality of interpretation the Germans would probably have solved the Boer question once for all, in the South African War, by shooting every Boer taken.

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\* So far as I can read the evidence it seems certain that civilians did at times take part in the fighting. This is expressly recognised by the Hague Convention, 1907, as entitling the people to be treated as belligerents if they "carry arms openly and if they respect the laws and customs of war."

On 11th August the German cavalry at Tongres amounted to two divisions. The next morning six regiments of cavalry and 2,500 infantry, with artillery and machine guns, advanced on Diest, a small unfortified town of some importance as a brewing centre. Diest lay west and north of the river Gette, where lay the Belgian army, whose strength and dispositions the German force were to discover. The main approach was by the high road crossing the bridge over the Gette at Haelen. The 3rd Belgian Cyclist Company, advancing about eight o'clock in the morning, raised barricades and entrenched at Haelen and to the north and south. The Germans were allowed to approach until they were well within range, when artillery and rifle fire were used with deadly effect. An attempt was made to rush the barricades by charging over the fields, with a complete disdain of the deadly fire; but the Germans were repulsed time after time. The fight at the bridge was of a similarly severe character. The men rushed on the guns and were mown down. After two hours of furious fighting, in which the Belgians had held their own, the German artillery arrived, and soon cleared Haelen. The cavalry then advanced along the main road towards Diest, but was heavily checked by fire from Zelck, a village north-west of Haelen. Heavy fighting went on during the next few hours, and the Belgians were slowly giving ground when the 4th Mixed Brigade arrived, and the tide was turned. General De Witte seized the moment to throw in his Lancers on the flank of the Germans. The movement was decisive, and at sunset the German cavalry were completely broken, and the infantry had fled before the Belgian onslaught, leaving behind with their dead and wounded the standard of the Death's Head Hussars. The battle of Haelen had proved a Belgian victory.

Another brilliant little encounter took place on the morning of 14th August at Eghezee, a small town about ten miles north of Namur, where a small force from the garrison took by surprise 300 German cavalymen and 400 cyclists. They were broken and compelled to flee in great disorder, many being taken prisoner. A number of machine guns mounted on motors were also taken.

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The next day a more significant engagement took place at the beautiful town of Dinant, which struggles up the limestone cliffs on each side of the Meuse, about eighteen miles south of Namur, and near the Franco-Belgian frontier. With a chequered history of siege and sack, like most Belgian towns, it had a dismantled fort on the crest of the cliffs on the east bank of the Meuse, and was a popular summer resort. The importance of the town to the Germans was the bridge. The bridge at Huy, above Namur, had been taken by a detachment from Bülow's army three days before, and if Dinant fell Namur could be isolated. Dinant had to be held at all costs, and a significant detail of the engagement was that the French were then found to be holding the line of the Meuse below Namur.

When the battle opened about six o'clock in the morning the town was lightly held by a handful of French infantry, but the streets were barricaded and the bridge crossed by wire entanglements and faced by machine guns. The German force consisted of cavalry, supported by two battalions of Saxon infantry with a strong force of artillery—all from von Hausen's army; and the first shells began to fall into the railway station. Gradually a number of hotels were involved. The fort, or citadel, which commands the whole town, from which it is reached by four hundred steps, was at this time held by the French with machine guns; but after four hours' fighting the numbers of the Germans began to tell, the heights were



captured, and the citadel had to be evacuated. The French, compelled to clamber down the steps towards the bridge, suffered heavily from the German fire. Just before noon French reinforcements arrived, and their machine guns played havoc with the German troops. Profiting by the disastrous French descent of the steps, the German infantry worked round the citadel, which now flew the German flag, and attempted to rush the bridge. Some actually succeeded in crossing it, in spite of the deadly fire from the machine guns, but, receiving them with the bayonet, the French left not a man alive.

About two o'clock in the afternoon the French artillery arrived, and in a few hours had the situation well in hand. The French infantry with reckless bravery took the offensive, some clambering up the fatal steps of the citadel, some going round the fort. At about 6.30 the flag was torn down, and the Germans were in flight towards the south and south-east before the French Chasseurs. Thus ended the first brush between von Hausen and the 5th French Army.

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By this time numerous little skirmishes had taken place between the Belgians and the Germans. General Sordet's cavalry corps had been operating in southern Belgium since 6th August, and had ably screened the French movements. But the work of the German cavalry had been successful. It was their duty to discover where the Belgians lay, and to cover the deployment of the main German armies. On 17th August news began to reach the Belgian Staff of the approach of large bodies of German troops. They had been crossing the Meuse day by day, and assembling on the west of the river. Von Kluck's vast army on that day began to move westward. The Belgians lay at this time behind the river Gette from Diest to Jodoigne, in front of the beautiful university city of Louvain, and Brussels.

The German cavalry screen, its work accomplished, was now drawn aside, and the heroic Belgians for the first time began to appreciate the real strength of the German army. It is a point worthy of record that most civilians everywhere seemed to think that such skirmishes as those at Haelen meant much more than they did. But when von Kluck began to move on the 18th it was speedily seen how great was the force he wielded. The Belgian army on this morning lay within a dense crescent of German troops, between Moll, north of the Great Nethe, and Gembloux, near the Dyle. The 2nd, 4th, and 9th Divisions of the corps of cavalry (von Marwitz) formed the horns of the crescent. The 2nd Division, moving from the direction of Westerloo, threatened to cut off the Belgian army from Antwerp; the 4th and 9th Divisions cut it off from the French.

It was on this day that the Belgian Government left Brussels and retired to Antwerp. At one o'clock in the morning motor cars left the War Office with the military archives. The State papers had already been sent to Antwerp. Early the next morning the thunder of guns could be heard in Brussels, and the German troops were found to be advancing towards Brussels from the south-east along the Jodoigne road.

So on the morning of the 18th a furious battle began, the brunt of the German blow falling upon the Belgian 1st Division, which was occupying Tirlemont. On that day the town was bombarded with the utmost violence, and, after a prolonged rain of shrapnel, cavalry and infantry of von Quast's 1st Corps were flung against the heroic little band of soldiers which attempted to stem the torrent. The 22nd Regiment of the line fought with the greatest courage, and when it retired it

had been reduced to 900 men. In the afternoon the shattered troops, unable to stand against the overwhelming onslaught, drew off towards Louvain, and the town was occupied by the Germans. Meanwhile the detachments of the 2nd Division had fallen back from Haelen and Diest after fighting a heavy engagement with von Linsingen's 2nd Corps. The Belgians had early appreciated the danger which threatened them of being cut off from Antwerp, and retirement was the only feasible expedient. The Belgian army withdrew behind the Dyle.

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The next was indeed a black day for Belgium. Little news had been given to the people, but in Brussels, in spite of the removal of the Government, it was announced and thought that all was well. Louvain had more of the feeling of disaster. Towards the north-east the guns could be heard, and in the evening a dull red glow from the direction of Tirlemont lit up the sky. Detachments of the troops from Tirlemont began to drift in, heavy with sleep. Early in the morning a German aeroplane flew over the town, and shortly afterwards a brigade marched in from Tirlemont. It was known that the army, badly shaken for the time, was retreating northward, and that the General Staff was near Antwerp.

The German line began to advance. The 2nd Corps opened the attack at Aerschot, a small town ten miles due west of Diest. Early in the morning a terrible artillery fire, directed by two low-flying aeroplanes, was opened upon the Belgian positions. Against tremendous odds a flank guard, consisting of a few regiments of Belgian soldiers, stood firm. Infantry supported by machine guns advanced, but, thrown back time and again, returned to the attack, with the utmost disregard of life which had already shown itself as a characteristic of the German soldiers. Two Belgian regiments which had fought with great gallantry at Liège here surpassed themselves, maintaining their positions and inflicting heavy losses on the enemy for over two hours. When the Germans were found to be attacking the right flank in an endeavour to cut off the troops from Louvain, and it was seen that the end could only be annihilation or capitulation, the Belgians fell back upon Louvain. Major Gilson with a few hundred men tried to cover the retreat; but he was severely wounded, and his men were cut to pieces, a poor handful of the brave little band reaching Louvain.

There at Louvain the firing at Aerschot could be distinctly heard in the morning. About eleven o'clock a German patrol was sighted. A little later the Germans arrived in force, and the scream of shells rent the air. The Belgian artillery had fallen back, but continued to reply to the enemy's fusillade. At the Tirlemont entrance of the town a Belgian regiment fell into position with machine guns. Towards 1.30 the Germans were visible less than half a mile away; in less than half an hour Louvain was in their hands, and their eyes were in the direction of Brussels. A circle of burning villages girdled the beautiful town, with its matchless town-hall and historic university—a sad omen of its own fate before many days had passed. The field army had abandoned the line of the Dyle, and were falling back into the entrenched camp of Antwerp. Some of the troops had to march nearly twenty miles from near Jodoigne before they halted, worn out, within the outer circle of the Antwerp forts on the 20th.

The situation of Brussels was now obvious to the Belgian authorities, though it was not fully appreciated by the citizens. There had been moments approaching panic when on the previous day it first became known that the city was not to



be defended. As the fearful and grief-stricken refugees streamed into the capital, the inhabitants besieged the trains to escape. Now something like calm had fallen on the city. The Burgomaster, M. Adolph Max, who now became known to the world, is a figure which seizes on the imagination. In the afternoon he issued a proclamation which deserves to be placed upon record. The translation published in the *Times* is as follows :—

“ A proclamation from the Burgomaster of Brussels :

“ FELLOW-CITIZENS,

“ Despite the heroic resistance offered by our troops, seconded by the Allied armies, there is reason to fear that the enemy may occupy Brussels. Should such an event come to pass, I trust I may count upon the calm and upon the *sang-froid* of the population. Above all, one should not lose one's head or give way to panic. The municipal authorities will not desert their post. They will continue to perform their duties with the firmness which you have a right to expect from them in such serious circumstances.

“ It is hardly necessary for me to remind my fellow-citizens of their duty towards their country. The laws of warfare forbid the enemy to use force to obtain from the population information concerning the national army and its means of defence. The inhabitants of Brussels should know that they are within their rights in refusing to furnish any information whatsoever to the invader. None of you must think of acting as guides to the foe. This refusal is indispensable in the interests of the country.

“ Every one should be on their guard against spies and foreign agents who should attempt to obtain information or provoke any form of manifestation. The enemy cannot legally attack either the honour of families or the life of citizens, or private property, or religious or philosophical convictions ; nor can they interfere with the freedom of public worship.

“ Any abuse committed by the invader should be immediately notified to me. So long as I am in possession of life and liberty I will protect with all my might the rights and dignity of my fellow-citizens. I implore the population to assist me in my task by abstaining from any hostile act, any use of arms, and any participation in fights or discussions.

“ FELLOW-CITIZENS,

“ Whatever may happen, listen to the voice of your Burgomaster and continue to trust in him. He will not betray you.

“ Long live Belgium, free and independent.

“ Long live Brussels.

“ ADOLPH MAX.

“ August 19.”

When the people of Brussels read this, it was at once evident that the dreaded blow was about to fall ; but its sharpness was broken by the confident ring in the words of their chief citizen. Without the proclamation Brussels would have slept but ill that night. For the Burgomaster there could be little sleep in any case. He knew that the Germans could not be more than a few miles away, and Belgium

had already seen too much of her powerful enemy not to be filled with misgivings. At any rate M. Max put the city in order and waited for the call.

Early in the morning the Burgomaster with his sheriffs drove out in a motor car to meet the military commander. The United States Minister was present at the meeting to announce that the city was under American protection. The details of the surrender were quickly arranged. The Burgomaster assured the German commander that no hostilities need be feared. Then came a long interval, the reason of which became clear later. In the city doors were closed and blinds drawn. A proclamation by General von Armin, commander of the 4th Army Corps from Breslau, was issued, which, apart from the threat of the "severest measures" if any act of provocation should be committed against the soldiers, was couched in dignified terms.

At two o'clock the reason of the long interval became apparent. The Germans intended to perpetrate one of the theatrical *coups* which are so dear to the Teuton mind. A fresh army corps had been brought up, and was to be paraded through the city. The approach was announced by the military bands, and then for hours the streets resounded to the tramp of men, the trotting of horses, and the trundling of wheels as the grey-green army—infantry, cavalry, artillery, sappers, with machine guns mounted in motor cars, pontoon bridge sections, and every other detail which could impress or intimidate—passed through to their camp beyond the city. The streets were deserted except towards the centre of the city, where crowds had gathered and looked on in calm indifference as the soldiers broke into the ridiculous goosestep. The Belgians had shown their fire in battle; now they gave an exhibition of the far more difficult art of receiving a reverse with coolness and dignity. In addition to the provision of whatever the Germans thought necessary, the Belgians were required to pay £8,000,000. This imposition on a city which had committed no misdemeanour, and had been handed over peacefully, was an action without precedent.

The machinery of occupation was quickly carried out. The stations, telegraph and telephone exchanges were taken over, and sentries were posted on the main roads. The General Staff occupied the Town Hall and left the Belgian flag flying, but ordered those of the Allies to be taken down.

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All the engagements up to this time, marked as they had been by boldness and daring on the part of the Germans and by splendid heroism on the part of the Belgians, were merely minor acts in the preliminary clearing of the Belgian plain for the main German force, which had not been involved. Wherever the Germans went they sowed outrage, fire, and death. The natural tendency of a free race to defend itself against unprovoked attack can never palliate the German crimes. Men, women, and even children remorselessly killed, and outrages committed which are too terrible to set down in print, are the chief evidences of German Kultur given to the world in these days. There is no doubt that at times the perpetrators were punished by the military authorities; but the Kaiser had inculcated a policy of terrorism, and these were its inevitable fruits. No doubt the fact that the Kaiser's armies were fighting against time also had its share in the brutalities.

A Belgian official inquiry vouches for the following:—

"During the night of 10th August, German cavalry entered Velm in great



numbers. The inhabitants were asleep. The Germans, without provocation, fired on M. Deglimme-Gevers' house, broke into it, destroyed furniture, looted money, burned barns, hay and corn stacks, farm implements, six oxen, and the contents of the farmyard. They carried off his wife, half-naked, to a place two miles away. She was then let go, and was fired upon as she fled, without being hit. Her husband was carried away in another direction and fired upon. He is dying. The same troops sacked and burned the house of a railway watchman. Farmer Jef Dierick of Neerhespen bears witness to the following acts of cruelty committed by German cavalry at Orsmael and Neerhespen on 10th, 11th, and 12th August: 'An old man of the latter village had his arm sliced in three longitudinal cuts; he was then hanged, head downwards, and burned alive. Young girls have been raped and little children outraged at Orsmael, where several inhabitants suffered mutilations too horrible to describe.' "

Such incidents could be multiplied, but no more need be said. Belgium had suffered terribly, and had still to suffer more before her passion was consummated. With the occupation of Brussels the Belgian campaign terminated, and the opening struggle of the main campaign began.

On 21st August Namur was partially invested, and at midday heavy artillery opened fire. The huge German force which had concentrated round Brussels began to move. The main body marched south towards Charleroi, Mons, and the west. Another body, devoted to the masking of Antwerp fortress, marched north towards Malines, and north-west towards Ghent. The British Expeditionary Force was concentrated and ready to be moved on the morrow towards Mons. The French army had taken up its station along the sides of a triangle which had its apex at Namur, the sides being defined by the Sambre from Charleroi and the Meuse to Dinant, and the battle of Charleroi had begun.

## II. THE FRENCH MOVEMENT IN ALSACE.

"France unjustly provoked, did not desire war; she has done everything to avert it. Since it is forced upon her, she will defend herself. . . . We are without reproach. We shall be without fear. . . . France has often proved in less favourable circumstances that she is a most formidable adversary when she fights, as she does to-day, for liberty and for right."—[Speech of M. Viviani, in the Chamber of Deputies, August 5, 1914.]

ALTHOUGH it is true that for most people the campaign in Belgium was the war for the first three weeks of August, significant events were happening in other parts of the theatre of war. Even in the western theatre of war strange and grave events had occurred. The French had to defend a frontier, approximately half of which was covered by the fortress barrier Verdun-Belfort, including the gap between Toul and Epinal. The German plan was to deliver their main blow through Belgium with a subsidiary stroke through the gap between the fortresses. Between these two arms the Allied army was to be enveloped, and the centre army, commanded by the Imperial Crown Prince, would give the *coup de grâce*. On the other hand, it was known that the French looked favourably upon a plan which turned upon holding the advance through Belgium, and struck through Alsace-Lorraine. If the Germans could achieve a real success on the northern frontier, the French pres-

sure would inevitably be released on the eastern frontier. On the other hand, a vigorous offensive pressed home in Lorraine would threaten the rear of the German armies operating in the north, and the German pressure on the northern frontier would necessarily cease as forces were drawn off to defend the weak point. A little later, when Joffre knew for certain that a formidable blow was to be struck through Belgium, the French armies were extended to the north and east with the intention of outflanking the German advance through Belgium at the same time that a vigorous attempt was made to cut the enemy in two by a thrust through the Ardennes.

Long before the war broke out all the possibilities in the case had been studied by the General Staffs of Germany and France—all, that is to say, except the behaviour of Belgium. France did not wish for war. Like every country which is strongly democratic, she was prepared to do or suffer almost anything to preserve peace. The movement for peace and hatred of war both rest upon the corner-stone of democracy, the conviction of the profound significance of each individual life, even the worst physically and economically. The French tactics in battle, like those of other great democracies, was coloured by this conviction. Germany threw her troops into battle like a reckless company-promoter speculating with other people's money; France sent her men off with the watchful prudence of a solicitor dealing with the trust-money of friends.

This argues no weakness in national fibre, as the Germans now know. France on the eve of the war comported itself with a composure and dignity which is the highest proof of such a contention. When the German Ambassador in Paris announced that Germany had called upon Russia to demobilise, and asked what the action of France would be, the French did not lose their heads or indulge in hysterical outbursts about a "scrap of paper." It was pointed out that at present there was no *casus belli* between the two countries, and a protest was made against so menacing a message under these circumstances. When, later, the German Ambassador announced that Germany considered herself at war with France, as French airmen had penetrated into Belgium and Germany, again there was no panic. The French Premier denied the truth of the reason given. It was, indeed, a clumsy lie intended chiefly to throw dust in the eyes of Italy and the rest of the world. Germans had already violated French territory on 2nd August at Cirey, as the French Premier reminded the German Ambassador.

The French troops had everywhere been drawn back several miles from the frontier in order that there should be no trace of incitement on her part. France had for years borne numerous insults and threats from her overbearing neighbour rather than take to the sword. She had dismissed a powerful Minister at the word of Germany. Even the Agadir incident caused more excitement in England than in France, and the latter met the alleged grievance of Germany in a friendly and conciliatory spirit.

Since 1870, indeed, France had renewed her youth. With the growth of democracy had grown the conviction that, although revenge would be sweet, its price was too heavy. Vivacious, spontaneous, and emotional as of old, the French had cultivated also a self-control which made their natural *élan* infinitely more dangerous. It was a strangely cool and controlled Chamber of Deputies which heard of the German declaration of war. And after the night of 3rd August, when the Paris apaches attacked Austrian and German shops, with the exception of a little singing



of the "Marseillaise," there descended upon Paris a calm which signified not depression but determination.

France was much better prepared than in 1870, though her eagerness for war was in inverse ratio to her preparedness. The new spirit in France meant a new soldiery, and of this the world soon became cognisant. Their amazing courage, *élan*, and dash were not less, but they could hold as well as reach. They had gained a string of new qualities, a fact which was not realised until the war had continued for some time. They had added steadiness, tenacity, perseverance to their other qualities.

General Joffre, the Commander-in-Chief, was characteristic of this new type of French soldier. He was originally, like Lord Kitchener, an engineer; and the engineers attract and breed cool, methodical, confident, and decided men. They have to deal with strictly calculable factors, and this breeds a calculating mind. The progress of General Joffre to supreme command had been steady and sure. He became Chief of the General Staff in 1911, and first became known to the world by retiring five generals whom he judged incompetent at the manœuvres. This one incident is a fair outline sketch of the man.

From such a man great things were expected, and friends of France felt their hope beating high when, on 7th August, he struck a blow at the southernmost point of his enemy's line. Alsace and Lorraine, the provinces torn from France in 1870, had never forgotten their origin or despaired of their destiny. Deep in the hearts of the dwellers in these provinces smouldered an undying hostility to German rule. Indeed, the Germans had never permitted it to die. Even during the last few years incident after incident, culminating within recent remembrance in the Zabern scandal, had pressed home with ruthless severity and completeness the fact that the people were a conquered race. In the Alsatian town of Zabern the boy Lieutenant von Förstner had offered a prize to any of his men who should kill a townsman, and later he even drew his sword on a cripple. It then became clear that the vanquished people must not laugh at the soldiers, however amusing or provocative their behaviour, and the military commander, Colonel von Reuter, completely superseded the civil administration, and even flung some of the civic authorities into the military prison. Lest the point should be missed, the final military courts—for even the docile German public rebelled at such behaviour, and called for a trial of those at fault—acquitted the soldiers.

It was in a province embittered by such memories that General Joffre struck. It had been reported that on the left bank of the Rhine the Germans had stationed only weak detachments, and Joffre thought the opportunity suitable for seizing the river crossings and thereby drawing the Germans away from Belgium, in which it was now known their main blow would be delivered. Some 6,000 men, infantry, with a small body of cavalry and artillery, crossed the frontier, and in the afternoon of 7th August advanced from Belfort on the small town of Altkirch, which lies about twelve miles from the great French fortress and also from Basle. Altkirch lies in a natural amphitheatre, and there were strong field-works defended by a German brigade, the forces, therefore, being about equal. Yet towards sunset the positions were carried by a series of splendid bayonet charges, and the town was in French hands. A regiment of dragoons galloped through the town in pursuit of the retreating Germans. Meanwhile the Alsatians had rushed from their houses and given a hearty welcome to the invaders. Old men with the memory of 1870 in their minds ran forth to embrace the French soldiers.

The next dawn saw the advance continued towards the important town of Mulhausen, nine miles north of Altkirch. Here, again, the positions were carried by nightfall, in spite of the vigorous resistance, and the soldiery were fêted that night by the Alsatians.

General Joffre circulated the following proclamation :—

“ CHILDREN OF ALSACE,—After forty-four years of sad waiting, French soldiers once again tread the soil of your noble country. Pioneers in the great work of revenge, what emotion and what pride fills them. To complete the work they have offered their lives. The French nation unanimously urges them on, and on the folds of their flag are written the magic words ‘ Right ’ and ‘ Liberty.’ Long live France ! Long live Alsace !

“ JOFFRE,

*“ General-in-Chief of the French Armies.”*

All seemed well ; yet the very next evening Mulhausen had to be evacuated before a strong German force which marched from the north and north-east. One column marched on Cernay, west of Mulhausen, while the other attacked the town from the north ; and the French, seeing their retreat jeopardised, left the town and withdrew from Upper Alsace.

It is interesting to notice that the Kaiser called this “ the first victory,” in spite of the fact that the “ fall of Liège,” two days before, had been announced in Berlin as a victory, and had caused the greatest enthusiasm. It is clear from this that it was realised officially that the occupation of Liège town was not “ the fall of Liège,” and that the announcement was, at any rate, misleading. In the campaign of lies in which Germany showed such ingenuity and dexterity it is not unimportant to have this admission that the “ first ” victory was the first in fact, but the second to be officially reported.

Upper Alsace reverted to the Germans as suddenly as it had fallen to the French. But what can be said of the strategy which led people to betray their attachment to the French and then left them to suffer for it ? Many reasons have been found for General Joffre’s action. It is quite certain that the Alsatian raid can be justified by its moral effect. After the disasters which had occurred on the last occasion when the French joined issue with German soldiers, the French, for all their admitted courage, met their conquerors at a certain moral disadvantage. Waiting but increased this ascendancy, and it was a prudent stroke for a general who trusted his troops to pit them as early as possible at fair odds against the enemy. Add to this that the statue of Strassburg was ever dressed in crape in the inmost heart of all Frenchmen, no less than in the Parisian street, and General Joffre’s blow seems shrewder than ever. But the chief reason was Joffre’s desire to compel the Germans to strengthen their left flank ; and though the attack did not reach its objectives it was among the factors which contributed to weaken the attempts to outflank the Allies on the West and simultaneously pierce the gap of Charmes.

As we have seen, the French soldiers bore themselves splendidly. Matched against equal numbers of Germans, they left no doubt as to their competence to deal, man for man, with the enemy. They were cheered and encouraged to a degree out of all proportion with the achievement, and, ironically enough, the Parisian Alsatians celebrated the victory by marching to the statue of Strassburg,



in the Place de la Concorde, and tearing away its crape two days after Alsace had once more reverted to the Germans. Undoubtedly the slight success was of great advantage to the French troops, but the affair had been badly handled and the general in command was superseded.

General Joffre now determined on the definite offensive which had been expected from him from the first. He gave the command of the Alsace army to General Pau, a veteran of 1870, who had been a rival of General Joffre for the position of Chief of the General Staff in 1911. On the left of Pau the 1st French Army, under General Dubail, operated between Nancy and Rambervillers, and Castelnau's 2nd Army was ready to the north of Nancy. The new attack at once showed a masterly handling of the situation. And it was a changed situation. It is a bungling craftsman who allows the householder to know that he has designs on the house.

The French offensive had to make its objective in the face of a vigorous counter-offensive, which was pressed home with characteristic decision. On the night of the 9th the French were driven out of Upper Alsace. On the next evening a strong force, operating from Metz, threatened the Spincourt region. This was a bold and sure stroke. If a German force could make good its hold here, it would threaten the left flank and communications of any force operating in Alsace and Lorraine.

On 11th August the Germans were in contact with the troops of Castelnau's 2nd Army at Spincourt. The town lies to the north-west of Metz, some twelve miles over the frontier, in French Lorraine. A vigorous action took place, and the French were at first obliged to fall back. Reinforcements, however, quickly came up, and the Germans were hurled back, with the loss of six guns and two ammunition wagons.

The next day another force from Metz marched in a southerly direction. An engagement at La Garde was a distinct German success, and many prisoners were taken. The advance was continued with equal success to Blamont. But on this same day the French offensive had begun to develop along the whole of this frontier. The passes Bonhomme and Saint Marie had already been carried.

On 14th August Thann was again taken by the French. The mountain peak Donon, which looks towards Strassburg, was carried, five hundred prisoners being taken, and Blamont and Cirey were retaken. This latter success included the carrying of the heights over against those towns on the frontier. The significance of the events of this one day alone was that along the whole frontier, from near Nancy to Belfort, the French advance was successful, and the German counter-offensive had, for the moment at least, failed.

On the same day two daring airmen flew from Verdun to Metz with the intention of destroying the Zeppelin sheds. They were a lieutenant and a corporal. They were received at Metz with a storm of shell, but coolly sought their objective in spite of it. Almost at the spot the lieutenant found his motor had stopped, but, resolved to accomplish his object, he "volplaned" to the hangers and discharged his bombs. Fortunately the motor a moment later restarted, and the airmen flew back.

By 16th August the French were firmly established in German Lorraine in the La Garde-Avrincourt district, and on this day achieved another success, which was significant enough to win the description from Germany of the "only German reverse." Making a rapid descent along the valley of Schirmeck from Mt. Donon, the French completely defeated a German force, taking 1,000 prisoners and capturing twelve guns.

Two days later the French, by the capture of the railway junction at Saarburg, had cut the direct railway communication between the two fortress buttresses of Alsace-Lorraine, Metz, and Strassburg; and they securely held all the Vosges mountain crests and valleys leading from them to the plain of Alsace. Their offensive had been pressed so vigorously and astutely in Upper Alsace that the Germans, retiring in haste, had left behind large quantities of material. On 19th August Mulhausen was once more in their hands, Gebweiler was occupied, they were clearing their way to Colmar, Strassburg seemed threatened, and success had made the French master of Alsace-Lorraine for a number of miles over the frontier. In ten days, against an enemy forewarned of their intentions, Pau, Dubail, and Castelnau had achieved this; but its military significance was, as events were soon to show, extremely slight.

If General Joffre had pressed the advantage without any cessation, with the utmost vigour, the whole fortune of the war in the West might have been very different. But for this numbers were required, and the French Commander-in-Chief throughout the war preferred ever to trade with a small fraction of his patrimony. He had only used sufficient numbers to weaken his northern line for the critical actions on the Sambre and Meuse. There is no evidence that he succeeded in seriously disturbing the German concentration, and he was as little successful in distracting attention from his projected counter-offensive through the Ardennes.

The advantage in Alsace-Lorraine brought the French no political advantage. It undoubtedly hurt the pro-French inhabitants of the provinces. The moral gain has already been considered. It was a difficult little campaign, fought with splendid courage on the part of the soldiers, and with considerable skill on that of their commanders. The occupying of the Vosges heights and valleys required coolness, intrepidity, and perseverance. In hard coin the French paid for their pacific behaviour in the days preceding the outbreak of the war. They had withdrawn within their frontier several miles to prevent the clashing of patrols. The Germans promptly seized the crests of the Vosges, and their skilfully concealed guns gave more than a little trouble.

**Morhange.**—And to what end this courage and skill? On 20th August the French lay before Morhange with the left of their line resting upon the Seille. In front of them lay the army of Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria. The country was wooded and did not permit of careful aerial reconnaissance, and when Castelnau's troops flung themselves on the German centre at Morhange they were met by a terrible machine-gun fire from skilfully entrenched positions. The 15th Corps, advancing too rashly, lost touch with Foch's 20th Corps on its left and the 16th on the right, and was cut to pieces. The remnants broke and streamed back, hotly pressed by the Germans. The retreat almost became a rout. A confused mass of soldiers of various arms and regiments, with refugees of all ages, made its way back in the mud and rain, and only the steadfast rearguard defence of General Foch saved the army from disaster.

The Germans claimed 12,000 prisoners and 50 guns; but the defeat hit deeper than this. Castelnau fell back upon the Grand Couronné of Nancy, and Dubail's army on his right had to retire with him. On 22nd August the French were still supreme in Alsace, but the German counter-offensive was pressed with such vigour that by the 26th the French were forced to evacuate Alsace. The Battle of Morhange was the first decisive success in the war.

Looking at it in retrospect, the whole of the Alsace-Lorraine campaign might





The Battle of Morhange and the Attempt to pierce the Gap of Charmes, showing approximate positions on 20th August and 25th August.

seem to have been waged by the consent of Germany. It was as though one had thrown a rope net over a lion. It rolled about and snapped idly at its bonds in a half-amused way until it felt the game sufficiently irksome to demand attention. Then with one stroke of the paw the whole intricate thing fell to bits.

It is difficult to conceive of the French, settled into their stride at the end of two months of the war, fighting such a campaign. The whole episode looks like a storm in a teacup judged by the events, staged on the heroic scale, which were about to engage the attention of the Allies. But it was the first attempt to seize the initiative, and in this purpose it failed completely.

### III. THE MYSTERY OF THE SLAV.

"So long as there remains the slightest hope of avoiding bloodshed all our efforts must be directed to that end. But if in spite of our most sincere desire we do not succeed, your Highness may rest assured that in no case will Russia cease to interest herself in the fate of Serbia."—[Telegram of the Tsar to Prince Alexander of Serbia, July 27, 1914.]

THE war at first presented to most people, certainly to all students, a vista beset with mystery. Hardly a thing loomed clear-cut and definite. Everywhere the situation was resolved into elements, almost all of which were problematical. The identity of the combatants, their fighting strength and fighting value, their strategy and tactics, their resources, the theatre of war—all these were problematical at the outset, and only emerged by degrees. Wiseacres entrenched themselves behind the axiom that "In war it is the unforeseen which happens." But this is true of all living action upon and reaction to environment.

The fact was that this war was not only a new and therefore a strange thing; it was stupendously new. It was so extraordinary that there existed no rules and standards by which to measure it. It was as little calculable in its onset, area, and effects as an earthquake.

But while so much is true of the general situation, it applied to no part with so much force as to Russia. Strangely vast hopes were built upon the great Slav kingdom, but the hopes were mingled with misgivings. Terrible fears were based upon it, but the fears were alternated with confidence. What would the Slav do? That was the mystery. No one has ever yet speculated courageously upon what the Slav *could* do. The Slav was thought, with some assurance, to be many things. He was known to be illiterate, and he was thought to be unscientific, disorganised, and slow. Hence the brazen magnificence of the German strategy: first beat the French to their knees, and then return to deal with Russia.

Russia had never been consulted about this moratorium, and, in fact, it did not belong to her plan, and had passed to a great extent from her handicap, driven away by a scientific and organised statesmanship. Russian patrols were over the frontiers of East Prussia on 2nd August; four days later the important frontier town of Eydtkuhnen had been seized; within three days her outposts had been pushed eighty miles westward; and in three weeks the Germans had been thoroughly defeated, and were beating a hasty retreat. So much for Slav slowness.

The Slav is as incalculable as the Celt, and this gave Germany its Ireland in



Poland. Take the populations of Germany, Austria, France, and Great Britain, and they exceed that of Russia by only about 10 per cent., and the bulk of this vast people lived on the soil with an elemental simplicity. In the simple round of their universe the Tsar occupied a unique position, as something great and awful and almost divine. Yet the emancipation of the serfs in 1861-3 had as one of its chief effects the making of every corner of his vast dominions unsafe to the Tsar. When he travelled, the track was scrupulously surveyed and lined with soldiers; where he rested, an army stood on guard. In some places he dared not set foot. All this was true until the war, with a strange alchemy, dissolved the mists of suspicion and hatred, united all in one heart and mind, and gave to the towns and cities the Tsar of the peasants, the God-given one. The Revolution did not come until this faith was undermined by the terrible course of the war, and middle-class minds profited by the widespread dismay to sow another gospel.

Ninety per cent. of the peasants have not sufficient letters to put their signatures to "a scrap of paper." It was this which simplified their creed and conduct, and it was of such stuff the army was made. Officered by men of a different class, it needed a war to drive the cohesion of sympathy and oneness of mind into this heterogeneous mass. This was one effect of the Russo-Japanese War. Another was to draw back the line of concentration of the western Russian armies from the Warsaw line, where a sudden *coup* might have thrown the whole mechanism of mobilisation into confusion. Yet another was to show the need of scientific organisation. Railways had grown almost by 50 per cent., an advantage which early made its presence felt in the war. The problem of clothing, feeding, and arming the army had been well solved, and in some respects the Russian armies took the field more elaborately equipped than any other.

Universal service was the law of Russia, but with such numbers at her disposal only a very small proportion of the people could be taken. The Cossacks were a relic of the feudal system, holding their land on military tenure. The Cossack cavalry were probably the finest horsemen in the world, and the infantry regiments had an *esprit* which made them a valuable unit.

It was an army recreated in every sense which emerged from the Russo-Japanese War. The Russian soldier has ever been noted for a simple and cheerful stoicism under suffering, which was rooted in his simple religious convictions. His religion, indeed, was one of his most pregnant characteristics. Yet, though the Russian soldier is uneducated in the school sense of the word, and has ever the primitive desire to get to close quarters in battle, he is not incapable of thought, and initiative has of recent years been strongly encouraged. Certainly in company with his fellows he seems almost incapable of fear, and will do with a laugh and for a wager the most hazardous things as if they were affairs of every day.

Splendid material, well organised, trained a little longer than most conscript armies, its leading was one of the most surprising things in the war. The strength of Russia, said the German Chancellor, was numbers. "Even superior numbers are not decisive," said Marshal von Hindenburg, in one of those flamboyant confidences which the true German cannot resist. But leading has ever been considered by Germany to be decisive, and it was in its leading the Russian army first surprised the world.

The Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke Nicholas, a cavalryman like Sir John French, had been chief in command of the Petrograd military district. He had

worked hard at his command, and, though not engaged in the Russo-Japanese War, had not failed to profit by its lessons. His Chief of Staff was General Januschkevitch, a distinguished officer, and there were present, holding various commands, a number of generals who had earned fame in the Russo-Japanese War. Among them was General Zhilinsky, whose brain conceived the opening operations of the war. Another was General Rennenkampf, a dashing cavalry leader and the idol of his soldiers. He was given command of the army which was to carry out the operations in the north of East Prussia. Another force was to operate in the south-east of the province. It was commanded by General Samsonoff, an able and distinguished soldier, and a man of great personal bravery.

On 2nd August the Russian patrols crossed the frontier at Schmidden and a small force of Cossacks rode into Johannisburg, an important junction on the strategic frontier railway connecting Lyck and Soldau. On the sixth the advance guards routed a small force of Germans at Eydtkuhnen, the enemy's casualties being about 100 killed. Three days later the Russian patrols had reached Stalluponen some miles west of Eydtkuhnen. In the next few days small patrols were swarming across the frontier, destroying railway junctions and carrying into this true Prussian country the growing fear which made a rabble of the Belgian populace. On 13th and 14th August, the Germans made vigorous attacks on the Russians at Eydtkuhnen but were thrown back, and a day later the patrols had penetrated as far as Gumbinnen and Insterburg.

So far the fighting had been an affair of little more than advance guards, but on 16th August the general advance commenced. Rennenkampf crossed the frontier to Stalluponen with between 160,000 and 200,000 men against whom there were available about 120,000 Germans. At the same time Samsonoff with a slightly larger army crossed the frontier at Soldau.

**Gumbinnen.**—The value of this early descent upon German territory was precisely this, to bring pressure to bear at once upon Berlin and so to relieve the pressure upon Paris. It was well known that Germany would throw the bulk and the flower of the troops upon France, and it was with the intention of relieving the French army of some part of the force of this attack that Russia invaded Prussia. It was not thought that the Russians could secure and hold East Prussia or even deal a decisive blow; but if they could, so much the better. The stroke was shrewdly delivered since it was upon true and natural as distinguished from nominal and accidental German territory such as the province of Posen. In German Poland the Slav population, with bitter memories of Prussian tyranny, looked to Russia for deliverance, and this the more wistfully after the Russian manifesto to the Poles.

In harrying East Prussia the Russians struck at a German nerve centre, and as the refugees streamed through the towns westward before the Russian advance Germany was forced to make some attempt to deal with a problem which she had thought would not emerge for some time. Two corps (the 11th, and Guard Reserve) were even sent back from France; but the effect was most felt in the allocation of reserve formations. When reinforcements were badly needed in France they had to be sent to East Prussia.

Rennenkampf's function was to drive the German troops arrayed against him into Königsberg and invest it, or drive them south. The rôle of the southern column was to take the retreating Germans in the flank and rear. Samsonoff also threatened the important railway junctions at Osterode and Allenstein, and with them to



cut off the whole of East Prussia east of a line through Königsberg. This important fortress and shrine of many of Prussia's most intimate memories was directly menaced by Rennenkampf who had installed himself on the railway line leading to Königsberg.

Astride the line in front of him the German troops barred his way. Rennenkampf, with superior forces, attempted to envelop the enemy. On 20th August he drove in the centre and doubled up the right wing. The following day he turned the left wing; but the Germans, seeing their peril, at once fell back behind Gumbinnen, which on 22nd August the Russians entered. The next day, following up the retreating Germans, the Russians occupied Insterburg, an important railway junction of lines connecting Tilsit with Osterode and Königsberg and Kovno. He



pressed forward towards Königsberg, forcing the bulk of the Germans to fall back upon the fortress. His success had given him numerous prisoners, much material, and, much more important, East Prussia east of the Insterburg-Tilsit railway. The occupation of Goldap and Allenstein at the same time created for Germany a situation which had, as we have seen, an important influence on the campaign in France. East Prussia was the home of the Junkers who supplied Prussia with its rulers and officers. The successful invasion was so deep a humiliation that it was impossible to resist their angry appeals for help, and the result was to cause the German Command a grave distraction at the moment when all their thoughts and all their power should have been concentrated on the West. So roughly had the Germans been handled that it was even proposed to retire behind the Vistula.

Meanwhile the Germans and Austrians were trying to disturb the Russian concentration by reconnaissances in force in various parts of Poland. On 2nd August a small German force exacted ransom from the town of Kalisz and then reparation for a contretemps such as happened later in Louvain. Shots were fired in the night. Five men from the house from which the shots had come were shot; 200 townsfolk, including the chief magistrate, were made to lie out in the street under the hot sun for an hour and a half. An attempt to ease one's position was punished by knocks and kicks. Three men also were shot. In this fashion did German Kultur come to Russia.

During the first three weeks of August similar raids by Germans and Austrians, though not all characterised by the same brutality, took place at Kielce, Plock, Krasnik, Vladimir Volinsk in Poland, and Kamenetz Podolsk in Podolia. In each case the raiders were driven back. They were not intended to do more than see how the land lay. Up to the opening of the battle of Gumbinnen no more formidable movement than raids of this nature had taken place in Poland. But the day Insterburg was occupied found a great Austrian army gathering on the Polish frontiers and two Russian armies were in Galicia.

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A little before this the Grand Duke Nicholas addressed to the Polish peoples an impassioned appeal, promising to unite the torn fragments of their country into one autonomous whole under the Tsar. "The dawn of a new life is beginning for you, and in this glorious dawn is seen the sign of the Cross, the symbol of suffering and the resurrection of peoples."

This appeal was not without its effect upon the Slav populations of Germany and Austria, as well as upon Russian Poland. It turned the war into an immediate personal interest as a national war of liberation. The victory of Gumbinnen, which gave the bulk of East Prussia to the Russians, found them also secure from a German advance in Poland and with the Austrian movement undermined by a strong and growing menace to Lemberg. When the march into Galicia was well under way the Russian Commander-in-Chief followed up his appeal to the Poles by another impassioned call to the Russian Galicians.

"Rise, fraternal Galician Russia, who have suffered so much, to meet the Russian army, for you and your brethren who will be delivered. Room will be found for you in the bosom of our mother Russia without offending peaceable people of whatever nationality."

These two appeals had a strong political and moral significance. The Germans had ever relied upon producing a moral effect upon the peoples against whom they were fighting. In the war they showed very clearly that the only motive they could understand was fear. The Russians with a finer intuition of the springs of human action relied upon hope. It is not necessary with the memory of Belgium fresh in mind to point out which nation showed the sounder judgment. The greatest loss which Germany will suffer from the war is the loss of the esteem or toleration in which she was held by the rest of the world. The immediate fruit of the appeal to the Galicians was the secrecy with which they kept the Russian movements and the joyous welcome they gave to the Russians on their entry into Lemberg.

**The First Servian Campaign.**—The original cause of the war—Servia—had not been idle. On 8th August Montenegro threw in its lot with Servia, and captured several small fortresses in Hertzegovina. Two days later the two armies



effected a junction, and columns were sent to operate in Bosnia-Hertzevovina to rouse the Serbs of those provinces and to attack the Austrian garrisons. The Montenegrin forces formed but a handful of men, hardy and brave, but ill-trained and little capable of orthodox fighting. But for the country in which they were to operate this was unnecessary.

Servia, after little more than six months' rest, was little prepared for another war. There were arms for hardly two-thirds of the army; but mobilisation was ordered on the day the Austrian Minister left Belgrade, and the people responded with the greatest enthusiasm. The small army had in effect to hold a line of about 350 miles—such was the length of their frontiers; and Field-Marshal Putnik, Chief of the General Staff, saw that this could not be done except at the cost of final disaster. The Serbs could only put part of their forces in the field against Austria; the rest had to watch other parts of the northern frontier and the Bulgarians. Advance guards were accordingly sent to the most probable points of invasion, and the main concentration was made in a triangle some thirty miles from Belgrade and Valievo. Putnik's strategy was based on the necessity for meeting the enemy on Servian soil. The Austrians were to be allowed to commit themselves before any counter-offensive was made. Individually, the Serbs are finely built men. Well-trained, though ill-equipped—stronger for their disregard on occasion of orthodox military rules—they were more formidable than the Austrians thought. On 12th August a concerted Austrian movement took place. The Servian frontier was crossed from the Drina and the Save, the objective being Valievo. Before the Austrian advance the Serbs retreated, but a cavalry force was sent to prevent the junction of the northern columns about Shabatz and the northern frontier with the columns threatening the Jedar valley.

On the 16th the main Servian army came into contact with the Austrians who were in the angle formed by the Save and Drina. The main battle front extended from Leshnitsa to Shabatz, towns on these two rivers, though the fighting extended as far as Belgrade, where the Save meets the Danube; and a column was marching upon Krupani. For three whole days the battle was hotly contested. The Serbs on the left flank and centre were driven back on the first day, but were successful at Belikamen, a few miles south-west of Shabatz; and the northern columns were by this engagement cut off from the centre and southern. The following day the Servian right centre made a successful advance along the Tser mountains, but to the north and south they were forced to retire. On the 18th an Austrian advance from Shabatz pushed back the Servian right, and this called a halt to the advance upon the Tser ridges. But the left flank, after some wavering before great odds, was reinforced and advanced. The following day the crisis occurred. All along the line the fighting was most severe, culminating in constant bayonet encounters; but by nightfall the advance was general, except in the Shabatz region, where the Serbs were still falling back. On the 20th the Serbs shepherded the invaders towards the Drina, and the tide had turned. Before Shabatz, although the critical stage had passed, the Austrians resisted strongly for three days, and succeeded in covering the retreat of their main columns. But on the 23rd they were compelled to evacuate Shabatz, and on the following day were thrust over the Save. Servian detachments crossed the river into Austrian territory in the pursuit, which continued for several days. In the severe fighting losses had been heavy on both sides. The Austrians, engaging some seven divisions, about 150,000 men of all arms, lost nearly 8,000 dead

and 20,000 wounded, and left between 3,000 and 4,000 prisoners in the hands of Serbia, besides many guns and much material. The Serbs lost about 18,000 dead and wounded.

On 21st August, when the advance on the Western front was still being continued in the face of energetic counter-attacks to save the retreat, the significant and ironical announcement was made in Vienna that, owing to the Russian intervention, Austria would henceforth regard the operations against the Servians as a punitive expedition and not a war, as she would require to gather all her forces to meet Russia. The announcement admitted great losses on the Drina, and to the observer seemed to say that, as Austria had found the conquest of Serbia a little more than the holiday task she had thought, for the future she would do her best merely to defend herself against the swarm of hornets she had raised.

In East Prussia, in Galicia, in Serbia, the incalculable Slav had begun to puzzle his opponents, and was yet to mystify them more.

#### IV. THE FAR-FLUNG BATTLE-LINE.

"Sir John Jellicoe and his principal Admiral spoke to me of the distress with which they and the great Fleet watched the heroic struggles of our Army in France and in Belgium, saw the fearful sacrifices demanded of them, and given by them; and they spoke of their keen desire to bring a more direct and immediate aid to bear with the mighty weapon which they wielded, and their desire, their natural desire, to share more immediately in the sufferings and the losses of the Army in the field. But they said: 'Lord Cornwallis was nearly three years taking Brest, and Admiral Nelson was more than two years taking Toulon, and we are only just beginning. *We must not be impatient, our turn is to come.*'"—[Mr. Churchill's speech at the Guildhall, Nov. 9, 1914.]

THIS was a war like no other wars: its field was the world. Wherever the flag of a belligerent flew, there the war held sway. From farthest East to farthest West the flags flew proudly over land settlements; from farthest North to farthest South the same was true; and in quarters where the flags were not found on land belligerent ships bore them on the seas.

At the outbreak of hostilities, therefore, the war threw some shadow in every quarter of the globe. Kiaochau, the settlement which Germany had leased from China and fortified at tremendous cost, was involved. On 16th August Japan, Great Britain's ally, delivered an ultimatum to Germany to withdraw at once from Japanese and Chinese waters German men-of-war and all armed vessels, and to hand over by 15th September the entire leased territory of Kiaochau. An answer was required by 23rd August, and, as none was given, the bombardment opened on that day.

Before this, however, a detachment of French and British troops had commenced the conquest of another foothold of German Kultur. Togoland, with its million of native inhabitants, was a German colony on the Gulf of Guinea. Lome, the capital and a port, was seized upon 7th August, and by the 26th the colony had been completely taken over.

South Africa was invaded by a German force on 19th August, but no invasion could have caused less anxiety. At the best it was felt that loyalists of the Union





could be trusted to deal with perfect adequacy with any invasion possible for Germany to contrive ; and at the worst the rule of a self-governing dominion like the Union of South Africa was felt to be primarily and finally its own concern, and if it preferred "Zabern" rule to self-rule that was its own affair. It does not need to be recorded that South Africa presented a practically united front against the enemy.

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These various engagements carried the war from Europe to Asia and Africa. It was carried still farther afield by the Allied navies. The British navy, the most imposing array of fighting ships the world has ever known, was in a state of magnificent efficiency when war broke out. The first two fleets took up their stations on 29th July, and full mobilisation was ordered on 2nd August. So far had mobilisation gone before that date, that on the following day Sir Edward Grey was able to announce that the navy was mobilised. Its strength was materially increased by the purchase of two Dreadnoughts just completed for Turkey, and of two monitors—vessels of very light draught and mounting heavy mortars—from Chili.

The reason for this happy state of affairs was simply chance. Some time before it had been decided to hold a test mobilisation instead of the usual manœuvres, and the fleet, on its return after the satisfactory completion of the test and exercises, had not been allowed to disperse. One of the first innovations of Mr. Churchill on becoming First Lord of the Admiralty had been the creation of a Naval War Staff and the reorganisation of the fleet into squadrons, with their complements of cruisers and smaller craft, somewhat resembling in their self-sufficiency the unit of the army—a corps.

The Grand Fleet was in some respects thoroughly prepared. In personnel it stood as it had ever stood, second to none. This is merely to understate the case. The British voluntary system, with its natural concomitant of long service, naturally and inevitably produces incomparable seamen ; and even the raw material consists of youths with a natural love of the sea and the service, and with the splendid heritage of the traditions of Drake and Nelson in their fibre.

In command were a generation of young men. Indeed, this does not refer to the supreme command alone. A visit to the great fleet gave one the impression that everywhere the command was in the hands of men who, on land, would be of little more than university age.

Chief in command at the actual outbreak of hostilities was Sir George Callaghan, an officer well and deservedly loved by the whole fleet for his distinguished service. In the ordinary course of events he would have hauled down his flag in December 1914, and to prevent the necessity of changing pilots in mid-stream, Sir John Jellicoe took over at once the position which would normally have fallen to him four months later. With the passing of Sir George Callaghan to the Admiralty the rule of young men lost its one exception. Sir John Jellicoe, who was appointed to supreme command, and hoisted his flag on the *Iron Duke* on 4th August, was only fifty-four years of age. A man of extraordinary personal bravery, who had seen service in Egypt and China, he was also known by all the great navies to be possessed of the rare sort of mind which not only applies but conceives and evolves strategy. Master of Ordnance under Lord Fisher, he was also efficient in the science and technique of gunnery. His work in manœuvres and various commands had given him the perfect confidence of his officers. As Chief of Staff was appointed another distin-



guished officer, Sir John's brother-in-law, Rear-Admiral C. E. Madden. And under Admiral Jellicoe's command were other assistants, all with a distinguished career in the service, none more than three years his senior, and one, Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty, eleven years his junior.

The functions of the British navy are many and important. The first and supreme function is to keep the United Kingdom free from invasion. In this war it had the additional function of guarding France from invasion by sea. Both of these were negative. The navy's first and paramount positive rôle in the war was to blockade Germany. It had to see that no vessel should reach or leave German ports with any sort of commodity which could be used for military purposes. It had to kill all German export and import trade.

The importance of this rôle can hardly be exaggerated. If it were perfectly carried out, the German armies would in time become an absolutely useless instrument. Self-supporting as Germany was, she was not sufficiently self-supporting to be able to exist for long without tea, coffee, and even wheat. If her armies were in action she could not long exist without cotton, oil, petrol, rubber, and copper, for motive power and the making of ammunition. This is but to enumerate some of her wants which bear more or less directly on her life or activity as a belligerent. Economically, many more things were necessary to her. Without cotton one vast branch of her industrial life fell to the ground. A little intuition would have enabled Germany to see that the navy *could* take Berlin, and it was a sure instinct which called for a strong navy.

The blockade was, therefore, a very deadly weapon, and it could not be enforced without much danger and anxiety. In the long hours of the night, in storm and mist and cold, in all weathers and at all times, an unremitting watch had to be kept. The enemy had a formidable navy, and knew how to use it. The German naval strategy consisted in wearing down the British superiority in battleships by submarine and torpedo attack, until the fleet could engage Jellicoe's Grand Fleet with fair chance of success.

The British fleet blocked the North Sea : this was a hand at Germany's throat. But Germany had a balance at the bank. She had a mercantile marine which had grown enormously in recent years. It was the work of the navy, in conjunction with the Allied navies, to sweep the German flag from the seas. Over twenty German ships were seized on 5th August, and as the days passed more and more work was provided for the British Prize Courts.

There were at the outbreak of war a number of German warships and converted merchantmen afloat on the high seas, whose function it was to harry the commerce of the Allies, and some of these undoubtedly achieved their end. Yet in spite of them it is true to say that the British navy, in conjunction with those of the Allies, policed the seas so thoroughly that the commerce of the Allied nations was not appreciably affected. We have seen how Great Britain dealt with the first feeling of panic by a system of State insurance ; but the North Atlantic was from the first almost as secure as in times of peace, and the enemy's cruisers in these and other waters could not prevent the safe passage of large bodies of troops from Canada and India.

This was, indeed, a most important achievement of the Allied navies. An official German *communiqué*, issued from Berlin on 15th August, said that "the English did not dare to send the Expeditionary Force to France because of their

fear of German submarines." At the moment when this was issued the bulk of the Expeditionary Force was on French soil; two days later it was, in fact, officially announced that the force had been landed completely, without any loss or any hitch. This, which a little imagination can visualise as a most difficult proceeding, was not the least achievement of the Allied navies. The line of communications which kept the British force in being was a line drawn across the seas. It had to be kept open, and when the retreat from Mons reached a certain point it had to be changed. That it was never so much as disturbed is one of the silent, unmarked things which the navy has accomplished.

An inglorious and somewhat amusing rôle was played by two of the enemy's ships which were in the Mediterranean when war broke out. The battle cruiser *Goeben* was a fast vessel of the modern type, and mounted the heaviest guns. Her consort, the *Breslau*, was a light cruiser, slower, but still a fast vessel. On 4th August the two cruisers caused a little mild excitement by bombarding the ports of Bona and Philippeville in Algeria. Little damage was done; but the cruisers disappeared and turned into Messina to coal, with the British and French fleets at their heels. According to the provisions of international law they left Messina on 6th August. French ships waited for them outside the northern territorial waters; British vessels, the speedier of the Allies, waited to the south. The hunted cruisers left in a mist of romance. They were reported to have steamed out to fight with bands playing, and all dispositions made for the worst. The German Consul held the wills of all the officers.

These were not fated to be requisitioned as yet, for the cruisers proved too elusive for their hunters. The small cruiser *Gloucester* managed to get within firing distance, and inflicted some damage, but she could neither persuade them to chase her nor even to wait for her companions. She had not the speed to keep up with them, and not a single vessel in the Allied fleets could reach within two knots of the *Goeben*. So the valiant pair steamed into the Dardanelles, and deliberately compromised Turkey. It was announced later that Turkey had bought the cruisers, a transaction of doubtful legality, and much diplomatic business was caused by Turkey's desire to keep the German officers on the vessels. When, later, Turkey threw in her lot with Germany and Austria, the convenience of having German seamen on a vessel the Turks could not work themselves gave the *raison d'être* of the circuitous Ottoman diplomacy.

War declared, neither the British nor the German navy lost any time in getting under way. Within three hours the British submarines E6 and E8 were on their way to carry out a reconnaissance in the Bight of Heligoland. Seven hours later the cruiser *Amphion*, with the Third Torpedo Flotilla, operating from Harwich, was engaged in patrolling, when they were told by a trawler that a minelayer had been sighted at work. Shortly afterwards the vessel was sighted steering east, and four destroyers gave chase, and in an hour caught and sank her. She proved to be the converted Hamburg-Amerika liner *Königin Luise*.

Survivors were picked up, and the flotilla proceeded on its pre-arranged plan. They started on their return course early in the morning of 6th August, and on nearing the scene of the *Königin Luise's* operations the course was altered. But this measure was not wholly successful, for the *Amphion* struck a mine and began to founder. The explosion was most violent, the captain being rendered insensible; and 131 men were killed, 20 being Germans who had been rescued the day before. A little after the captain had recovered and had joined the crew in the boats, the



*Amphion* struck another mine. A second violent explosion occurred, and one of the *Amphion's* shells burst on the deck of one of the destroyers, which had come to the rescue, killing two of the men and a German prisoner.

The *Königin Luise* had been laying mines a little to the north of the latitude of Harwich, a significant fact. The Germans evidently wished to establish a blockade of the base of the destroyers and submarine flotillas whence it was thought the Expeditionary Force would issue. The only result of this and later attempts was the sinking of the *Amphion* and, some time afterwards, the *Speedy*.

The mining of Harwich was a perfectly legitimate object, but the Germans, on the occasion of this first attempt, and still more later, adopted the practice of sowing mines indiscriminately in the trade routes of the North Sea. This was virtually a violation of the Hague Convention, but the Germans had never agreed to provisions which would make it an indisputable infringement. The German delegate at the Convention of 1907 had contrived to have the articles dealing with the laying of mines in the open sea so framed as to leave any one free to adopt the practice. The effect of the articles is to put a nation on its honour as to their use. The chief result of the German practice as to mine-laying was to make the North Sea unsafe for neutral vessels, and several fell victim even in the first few weeks of the war.

A few days later the German submarine U15, searching British waters, as the British submarines were reconnoitring the enemy's, was rammed by the cruiser *Birmingham*. An amusingly circumstantial account was published of the almost miraculous firing of the cruiser, which was reputed to have smashed the submarine's periscope by a shell; but the submarine did not meet its fate in so dramatic a fashion.

The British submarines were, from the outbreak of the war, patrolling the enemy's waters. Up the Kiel Canal, in the Bight of Heligoland, in the mouths of the Ems and Elbe, they lurked day by day, bringing back valuable information and ready to seize any chance to take a vessel unawares. They occupied German waters, reconnoitred her anchorages incessantly. Few chances fell to them. The enemy knew how to protect his ships against submarines, and his tactics were skilfully carried out. Sometimes the submarines were "hunted for hours at a time by torpedo craft and attacked by gunfire and torpedoes." Yet this most dangerous service was "keenly sought after," according to the official dispatch.

The submarine U15 was sunk on 9th August. This was the time when the transport of the Expeditionary Force began. Until the transport was complete on 17th August, and as reinforcements were sent across, the submarines patrolled the North Sea night and day, in positions such that if the high sea fleet had emerged they could have attacked it. The security of the Expeditionary Force was still further assured by a continuous patrol of seaplanes and airships between the French and English coasts. The German fleet seems to have awakened to its opportunity just when the time had passed. On the 18th some desultory fighting occurred between the German cruisers and the British flotillas, and a "certain liveliness" was apparent in "the southern area of the North Sea."

This is a strange fact. We have seen that on 15th August the German official news boasted that the Expeditionary Force dare not cross the sea, and now, on the 18th, the day after it was landed, the German cruisers began to be "lively." An obvious explanation of the coincidence would be that Germany did not know the transports were crossing the sea all this time. But the fact, though not announced in the British press, was certainly reported in many Continental papers.

Two other minor naval casualties occurred on 16th and 18th August. On the former date the Austrian cruiser *Zenta* was sunk in the Adriatic by the French fleet, and two days later an Austrian torpedo boat struck a mine off the chief Austrian naval base, Pola, and foundered.

So far the casualties had been small, though the achievements of the British and Allied fleets had been great. There had been no general engagement except in the heated imagination of a few journalists. There had been no stirring fighting when Admiral Jellicoe determined to lure the enemy into the open and there make him fight. The imposing British force gives the impression that the result of any fight was a foregone conclusion. So much, indeed, might be said with the same amount of truth of any engagement between German and British ships in the North Sea. If the German fleet accepted the challenge to fight *à outrance*\* it would almost certainly be sunk, and in the engagement of 28th August Admiral Jellicoe wished to entice from the cover of Heligoland as much as he could of the high seas fleet.

It was, therefore, an imposing force which left its base on 27th August. There were the First Battle Cruiser Squadron, with its five huge ships and four attendant destroyers; the First Light Cruiser Squadron, with five town-class cruisers, including the *Birmingham*, which had already been in action; the Seventh Cruiser Squadron, with seven cruisers, including the ill-fated *Cressy*, *Hogue*, and *Aboukir*; the *Arethusa*, with the First Destroyer Flotilla of eighteen ships; the Third Destroyer Flotilla, with seventeen "L" ships; and the Eighth Submarine Flotilla, comprising the destroyers *Lurcher* and *Firedrake* and eight submarines.

The battle which ensued is as little like the naval fights of former days as Admiral Jellicoe's flagship was like the *Victory*. Over an area of sea which was not very large a number of independent operations and engagements took place, with no possibility of any one mind directing them. The ruse employed by the British seems to have been like the pressing of a button which released the lid of a veritable Pandora's box.

The submarines E6, E7, and E8, with the destroyers *Lurcher* and *Firedrake* in their wake, in the early morning hours had approached near Heligoland. E6 and E8 had found, on earlier reconnaissances, that a large fleet was at anchor in the Bight of Heligoland, and their rôle on 28th August was to act as decoy. Three submarines sailing on the surface of the sea at daylight, with two destroyers in the rear, offered a tempting bait, and it was a bait to which the fish rose.

Away to the rear in suitable stations waited the other ships, who were to cut off any vessels which might be lured into the open and then engage them. The decoy was too tempting. Some twenty German destroyers came out, and the submarines steamed away as prearranged. Presently the *Arethusa* caught sight of a destroyer, and a division of British destroyers gave chase. About 7.30 the *Arethusa* and the Third Flotilla came into action with the bulk of the German destroyers, which were racing back to Heligoland. They steamed to cut them off. Meanwhile two German cruisers had appeared on the scene, and for about an hour and a half the *Arethusa* was under fire from them and several destroyers. The larger of the two cruisers a little later transferred her attention to the leader of the First Destroyer Flotilla, *Fearless*, and the *Arethusa* made short work of the remaining cruiser, which steamed off to Heligoland with its forebridge shot away.

\* This is not to be taken as meaning more than that Jellicoe could muster, with the Harwich and Dover forces, a sufficient force to have annihilated the Germans if battle had been accepted on his conditions.



The *Arethusa* had been fighting for some two hours, and had sustained heavy damage. All the guns, except one 6-inch, and the torpedo tubes were out of action, and the deck was on fire. The signal officer, Lieutenant Westmacott, was killed at the side of the captain during the action. Yet perfect discipline was preserved; the fire was put out, and the guns, except two, were in working order in less than two hours.

Meanwhile, near by, the First Flotilla had sunk the German commodore's destroyer, V187, and the destroyers, on lowering their boats, had been fired on by a German cruiser as they attempted to save the survivors. The two boats had to be left with their crews, but E4 came up, submerged, to attack the cruiser, which beat a hasty retreat. E4 then returned, and the commander, E. W. Leir, on nearing the boats, rose to the surface, opened the hatches, and took on board a lieutenant and nine men belonging to the destroyer *Defender*, and one German officer and two men. He left one unwounded German officer and six German seamen to navigate the two boats of wounded to Heligoland, and, before leaving, though every moment was perilous, he saw that the Germans had water, biscuit, and a compass.

About ten o'clock the *Arethusa* steamed off once more with the First Flotilla to the assistance of the destroyers *Lurcher* and *Firedrake*, which, she had heard, were being chased by light cruisers. For half an hour she steamed towards Heligoland, but then, not having seen the destroyers or their pursuers, she turned westward. A little later a four-funnelled German cruiser appeared and opened a heavy fire. The destroyers were ordered to attack, and the cruiser turned away. About ten minutes later the cruiser reappeared, and the *Arethusa* opened fire, but her position being critical she reported to the Battle Cruiser Squadron. Salvo after salvo was fired by this large cruiser, but not a single shell struck. All fell short some ten or thirty yards, and even the torpedoes, well directed as they were, were short. About this time the Battle Cruiser Squadron was under attack from the German submarines, but by rapid manœuvring avoided them, and the destroyers attacked the submarines. When the *Arethusa* reported the attack by the large four-funnelled cruiser, Sir David Beatty ordered the Light Cruiser Squadron to go to her assistance. A further call for assistance came, and Sir David determined to take the Battle Cruiser Squadron into action. It had been lying a little to the north-west. Working up full speed, it steamed to the attack about 11.30.

The *Arethusa*, with the help of the *Fearless*, had by this time so severely handled the large German cruiser that it steamed away. Hardly had she drawn off than the German cruiser *Mainz* appeared, and the *Arethusa*, *Fearless*, and destroyers opened fire. In about twenty-five minutes she was seen to be sinking by the head, her engines were stopped, and she was on fire. The Light Cruiser Squadron, which appeared at this moment, speedily reduced the *Mainz* to a hopeless condition.

The Battle Cruiser Squadron now appeared. It had just turned noon. The *Arethusa* had now discovered another enemy, a large four-funnelled cruiser, the *Köln*. This was notified to Sir David Beatty, and in a short time the cruiser was sunk. Sir David's flagship *Lion* also discovered a two-funnelled cruiser, the *Ariadne*. Two salvos from the *Lion's* heavy guns, and the cruiser disappeared into the mist, burning furiously and in a sinking condition. The *Lion's* firing, as Sir David pointed out, was extremely creditable, as the cruiser was steaming at a high speed on a course at right angles to the flagship. A little later the German

submarines made an attack on the Battle Cruiser Squadron, and on the light cruiser *Lowestoft*, but without success.

The retirement was now ordered, and the squadrons concentrated. Many of the vessels engaged had suffered damage, the *Arethusa* most of all. At about 7 P.M. the *Arethusa* had to be taken in tow by the *Hogue*. No lights were permissible except two hand-lanterns, and towing in such circumstances was anything but a safe or easy undertaking. But it was successfully carried out, and the British ships returned to their base without any loss. But there had been a number of casualties among the men: thirty-two were killed and fifty-six wounded. On the German side the *Köln* and *Mainz* (two modern cruisers) and the *Ariadne* (an older type of cruiser) had been sunk, with the destroyer V187. Numbers of other destroyers had been seriously damaged.

Of the numerous brave and heroic deeds during the engagement it is impossible to speak. Officers and men behaved under fire with the utmost coolness and unselfishness. Several, although badly wounded, remained at their posts until their work was no longer necessary, and at least one rendered efficient first-aid to others before being attended to himself. This brilliant little action showed up in an ironic light the tradition of the German navy. It had been said that their constant toast was "The Day"—the day when they should meet the British navy on the open seas. The officers and men showed all the gallantry that was to be expected of them, but their efficiency was not of the same high standard. That a large cruiser should waste numbers of shells and torpedoes without once securing the range was hardly an encouraging omen of the issue of "The Day."

Several German seamen were shot by their officers in full view of British officers and men. This was denied by the Germans, but many German seamen were suffering from pistol-shot wounds. A suggested explanation is that these seamen had jumped from the *Mainz*, as she was sinking, without leave. It has also been suggested that the officers shot their men because they did not fight their ship to the last moment. Whichever be true, it can hardly be doubted that the spirit of the officers was undaunted, and that, in spite of the inglorious action of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, the German navy as such provided a worthy foe for the British service.

## V. THE FRONTIER BATTLES.

"Belgium has ever been faithful to her international obligations; she has fulfilled them in a spirit of loyal impartiality; she has not neglected any effort to maintain her neutrality or make it respected. . . . Conscious of the rôle Belgium has played for more than eighty years in the world's civilisation, the Government refuses to believe that Belgian independence can only be preserved at the price of the surrender of her neutrality." —[Belgian reply to the German ultimatum, August 3, 1914.]

ANY one surveying the whole sphere of the war about 20th August would have been justified in coming to a conclusion favourable to the Allies. Everywhere, with the solitary exception of Belgium, the Allied cause seemed to be going favourably. Russia was pressing the invasion of Galicia and forcing the Battle of Gumbinnen to a triumphant conclusion. The Austrian army had been hurled back in disorder across the Drina by the Servians. Upper Alsace was once again, and this



time more thoroughly, in French hands; Strassburg was threatened, and the Vosges crests had all been taken. The blockade of Germany was proceeding, and the Japanese were preparing to besiege Kiaochau. Everywhere success or the immediate and assured promise of it. Even in Belgium there lay a reasonable hope. Liège, with an insufficient garrison, had inflicted heavy loss on the Germans, and for some time delayed their advance. Surely Namur could be trusted to give a better account of itself now that the French were in Belgium; and, if Namur held, it might form the pivot of a sweeping movement which would restore the German soldiers to their fatherland.

Yet on this very day there began a movement which prefaced the destruction of this rosy picture, a destruction so complete and overwhelming that within even a few days the picture seemed in retrospect to have the insubstantiality of a dream. Section after section, as though a censor were deleting a message, the picture disappeared, and in its place grew another of an overwhelming German triumph.

If any one could have viewed the whole of the Western front between Tournai and Switzerland about this time, he would have seen a grouping of forces something like this: Between the sea and Valenciennes there were a number of divisions of indifferent quality, under General d'Amade; farther to the west the British army was preparing to move northward to take up its position on the Sambre; towards Namur lay the 5th French Army, under General Lanrezac, with the 1st Corps, under General Franchet d'Esperey, on its right about Namur; below Namur the Meuse line to Givet was guarded by only the 51st Reserve Division, and this gap in the line, quickly appreciated by the Germans, was promptly attacked. Between Rocroi on the Meuse and Virton, in Belgian territory, lay the 4th Army of General de Langle, whose mission it was to strike up through the Belgian Ardennes. On his right, covering the 4th Army from attack through Luxemburg, was General Ruffey's 3rd Army, with an army group of four divisions but recently assembled, and put under the command of General Maunoury, on his right. Farther south, before Morhange, was General de Castelnau's army, with the 1st French Army, under Dubail, lying across the Vosges, on its right. In Upper Alsace was General Pau's force.

Against this formidable disposition a vaster army was arrayed. Towards the sea General von Kluck's 1st German Army moved towards Tournai and Charleroi, with General von Bülow's 2nd Army on its left, stretching towards Namur. Approaching the unguarded gap on the Meuse was von Hausen's 3rd Army, the formation of which surprised the French as much as Maunoury's group surprised the Germans. In the Ardennes was the Duke of Wurtemberg's 4th Army, with the Imperial Crown Prince commanding the 5th Army, on its left. With Castelnau's troops the Crown Prince of Bavaria was hotly engaged, and on his left was von Heeringen's 7th Army resisting Dubail's advance. In Upper Alsace an army detachment under General von Gaede lay in front of General Pau.

It is of importance to appreciate the strength of these forces. Kluck had five corps, without the two he had sent to mask the entrenched camp of Antwerp. Bülow had six corps. The Guard Reserve did not leave for Russia until the end of August. There were actually brought up against this force the two British corps and 6½ corps of the 5th French Army—that is, there were 8½ Allied corps against 11 German corps. If we add in Hausen's corps, the German total became 15 corps, or almost 40 per cent. of the German troops on the frontier, against 8½ corps, or 25 per cent. of the Allied troops in position. The troops of the 4th and 5th German Armies

had available about 10½ corps, against which Joffre had concentrated a force about equal to 14 corps. The Alsace-Lorraine group of armies comprised about 15½ corps on the French side against 12½ on the German.

The German dispositions were relatively and absolutely very much stronger on the northern or Belgian front than on the front facing westward. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd German Armies must have totalled some 545,000 men. Thus disposed, this incomparable army was directed by General von Moltke, the Chief of the German Staff, who had justified his choice for the supreme command by his efficient conduct of manœuvres, and was about to justify it still more on the field of battle. The French forces were most dense on the Ardennes sector and in Alsace-Lorraine. On both sectors the French were considerably superior numerically, and in the Ardennes the superiority was slightly greater than in Alsace-Lorraine.

On 20th August the French offensive in Lorraine was suddenly checked, and its advance turned into a retreat which bore the appearance of a rout. It was the most conclusive engagement in the Western theatre up to that time; but its greatest significance is that it was but the first of a series of crushing blows.

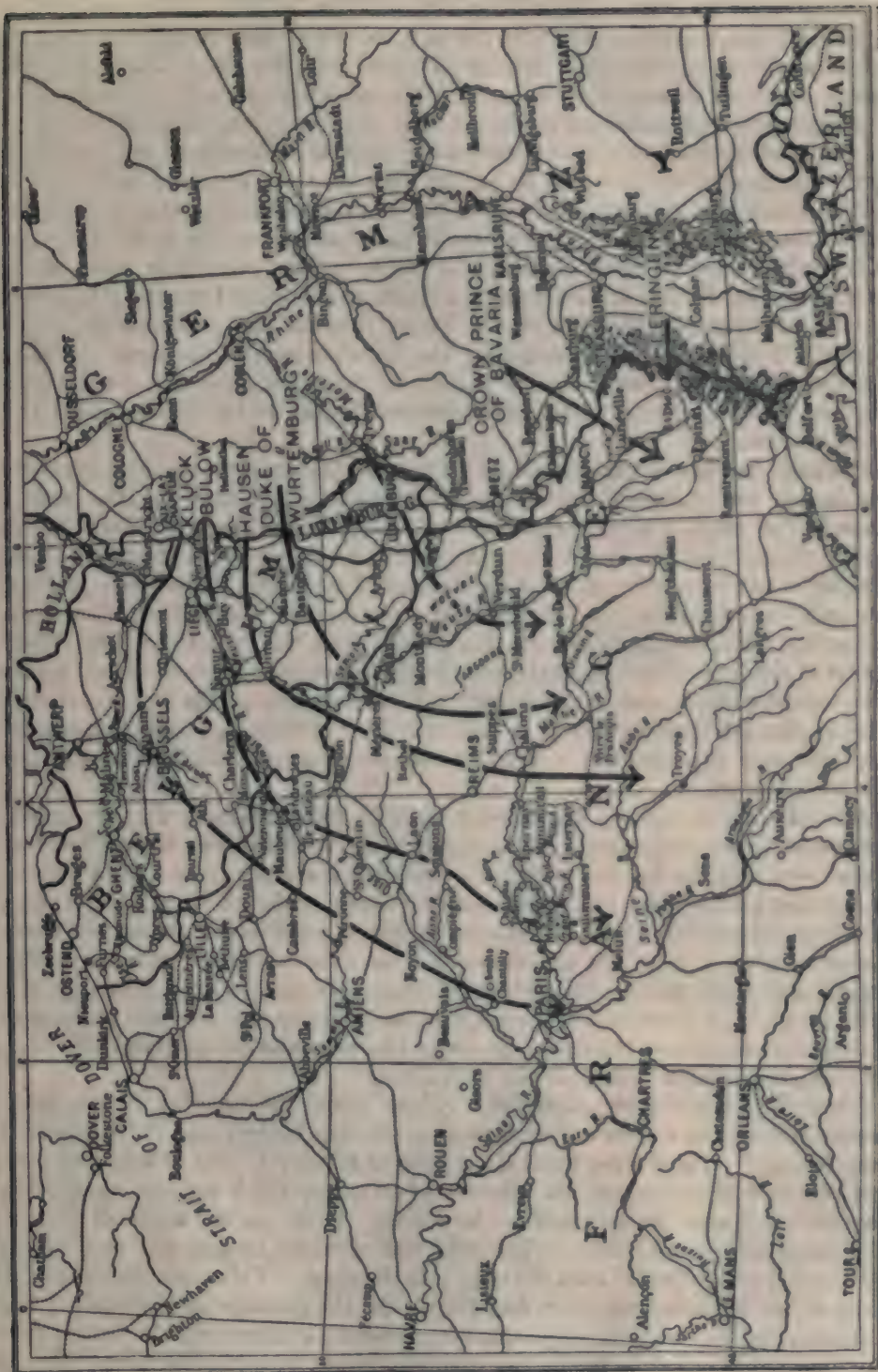
At this point no one on the side of the Allies seems to have taken an accurate measure of the German offensive, and the distribution of the enemy's troops was similarly misconceived. One cannot pretend to read General Joffre's mind, but his conduct of the operations of the Allies at this period seems to show that he had no knowledge of where the full force of the German attack would fall, and of the approximate numbers which would be used to apply it. It had been well advertised that the Germans would strike through Belgium, and if they had not intended to keep to the programme why did they alienate Great Britain by invading Belgium? General Joffre had reason to know that Upper Alsace was but weakly held by the enemy. The main German force was, therefore, somewhere to the north, and probably on the Belgian front. Lord Kitchener, who showed a better grip of the situation, warned the French Generalissimo that the main blow would be delivered through Belgium, but without producing conviction. Almost up to the retreat from Mons the French Staff thought that the Germans could only dispose of 200,000\* troops on the Belgian front.

What Joffre did not realise, but was soon to know, was that up to 18th August the German forces were everywhere along the line as a raised spear, which at the determined moment would be hurled with overwhelming force at the heart of France.

General Joffre's later strategy was, as we have stated, to outflank the German advance from the west while striking through the Ardennes, and in preparation for these operations he determined to concentrate his left on the line of the Sambre to Namur, and from the fortress barrier along the Meuse. It had been difficult to avoid throwing a formidable force into Belgium to prevent the occupation of Brussels, and the line chosen seemed to have many strong advantages. But the concentration could not be made in time. There were available for the left wing some 535,000 troops, if we include the armies of Namur and Maubeuge and the 110,000 men who were put under General d'Amade. The French and German forces were thus about equal in strength, though a much smaller proportion of the Allies was assembled for the first battle with the main body of the enemy on the 21st.

\* Lieutenant-Colonel de Thomasson, the distinguished French military critic, states that the Germans put twelve more corps into the field than the French Staff had expected, by incorporating reserve corps in the shock armies (*Le Revers de 1914 et ses Causes*).





The Advance of the German Armies.

Namur, it was thought, would hold out for a few weeks, and the advance upon the fortress would be delayed long enough to enable the British to operate against Kluck's flank. If Namur held, General Joffre expected much from his thrust in the Ardennes. If this succeeded, the German army marching through Belgium—if it could advance—would be in peril, since its line of communication would be directly threatened, and it would be cut off from the German centre and left. On the other hand, a failure at Namur and on the Sambre would mean that the Germans could march towards the communications of the armies operating in the Ardennes.

Everything pivoted upon Namur, and precisely here everything went wrong. The action about Namur opened under very different auspices from the attack upon Liège. Since the splendid resistance at Liège, Belgium had been overrun by the Germans; Brussels had been occupied; the Government and the army had fallen back upon Antwerp. Forts Maizeret and Dave, the easternmost and southernmost forts, had been engaged on 15th August, but had beaten off the attack, which after all was but slight.

**Charleroi and the Sambre Crossings.**—On 21st August a tremendous bombardment began, but a much more significant action had opened to the west of Namur. The town and neighbourhood of Charleroi had been occupied by the French, whose function was to hold the line and passage of the Sambre. Large bodies of Sordet's cavalry patrolled the district to the north of the town, and very early on Friday morning, 21st August, the constant crack of rifle firing showed that the German advance guards had effected contact with the French. A little later a handful of German cavalry, with the extraordinary daring which had already become characteristic of them, rode into the town of Charleroi itself, and at first was thought to be an English patrol. When it was seen by the French, it was immediately recognised and put to flight. A few hours after this the German attack upon Charleroi commenced.

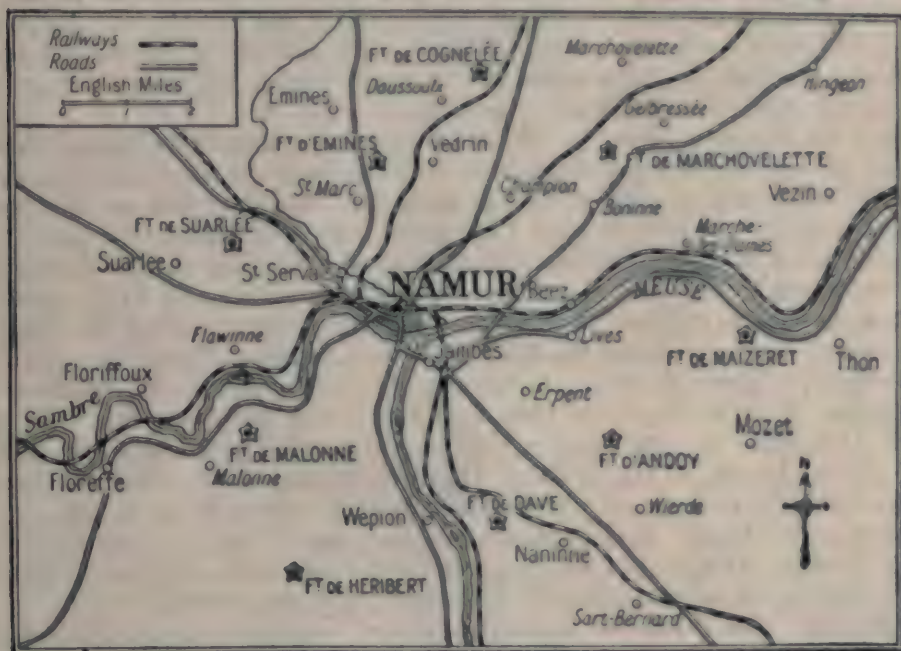
A bombardment opened which went on with little cessation during the day. Determined to win the passage of the Sambre, the Germans hurled their full force on the town, and the battle was fiercely contested along the river line to the east. The German infantry ran forward in close formation under cover of their artillery, and though mowed down by rifle and machine-gun fire, the sections re-formed almost as soon as broken, kept on, and triumphed by sheer weight of numbers. Their gunnery was good, though their shrapnel frequently missed fire. The men were indifferent shots, but the machine guns kept up a deadly fire. By the evening the Prussian Guard had won the crossings east of Charleroi and occupied the hills to the south despite the heroic efforts of the 10th Corps.

Every inch was fiercely contested. At one point the Algerian Turcos hurled themselves from the streets of Charleroi on a German battery and put the gunners to the bayonet. The Turcos themselves suffered terribly in this charge, and every effort proved fruitless to stem the advance of an enemy much superior numerically, whose discipline and courage could not be shaken. In the narrow streets of the town the struggle became an inferno. The dead and wounded became fast wedged, and the Germans pressed their advance over this shambles. Taken and retaken again and again, on Saturday the town had fallen, and the passages of the Sambre were in German hands. General Lanrezac never seems to have used his army as an army, and at no one time in the battle did he strike with his full force. But his position was one of extreme difficulty. Sir John French was not ready to take the



field, and Lanrezac's left flank was therefore uncovered; and Hausen, attacking across the Meuse, threatened to get behind his right flank. If Bulow and Hausen had struck in unison they should have captured Lanrezac's army. Meanwhile the Germans, profiting by their experience at Liège, had set their heavy siege guns to bombard Namur.

**Namur.**—The bombardment of Namur continued. It was a ring fortress like Liège, and high hopes of Namur's resistance were based upon the heroic struggle of that fortress. There was, indeed, too much hope and confidence. None of the lessons but all of the pride of Liège seemed to be remembered. It had been proved as clearly as possible—by example, that is to say—that a ring fortress in the presence of effective siege artillery is as strong as its mobile garrison. If the forces between the forts were well entrenched, even the fall of the forts could not vanquish them.



The Fortress of Namur.

If they were not suitably entrenched, even if the forts held the fortress could be taken by rushing the spaces. The town would fall first, and then the forts could be reduced at leisure. The Germans had learned their lesson. The Belgians were vanquished by the victory of Liège.

The Germans had no intention of repeating the mistakes of Liège. The key to the position was guns, including the 11.2-in. siege gun and that rare unwieldy monster the 17-in. The 11.2-in. howitzer has a maximum range of about six miles. It weighs not quite  $6\frac{1}{2}$  tons; but in action, with its recoil cylinders and firing carriage, the weight is almost 15 tons. Its shell weighs 760 lbs., and carries a hundredweight of high explosive.

The Belgians, obsessed by the perfection of the Brialmont mechanical defences, suffered, as the Germans were to suffer in the early part of the war from a similar obsession with their mechanical strength. General Michel, the Commander of

Namur, had provisioned the fortress, accumulated ample supplies of ammunition, mined large areas round the forts, and protected his entrenchments with electrically charged barbed wire. But he was unable to prevent the Germans placing their guns with careful deliberation at the best possible positions. The simplest and commonest contrivance covered this manœuvring. A moving screen of cavalry veiled the siting of the guns until all was ready, when a heavy storm of shell fell upon Namur.

For many hours a terrible bombardment fell upon the entrenched lines. Hour after hour the deadly fire rained upon the trenches where the Belgian soldiers stood or sat or lay, trying to find some shelter from such punishment. Rifles were useless. No enemy could be seen; but all the time, with a sickening persistence, the deep boom, the whistling scream, and then the explosion. Nothing could be done; death came through the air, sought out whom it chose, and passed whom it did not wish. Men went mad with terror. When a great number of officers had been killed and the men had been under fire for nearly twelve hours, several sections jumped from the trenches and bolted *en masse*.

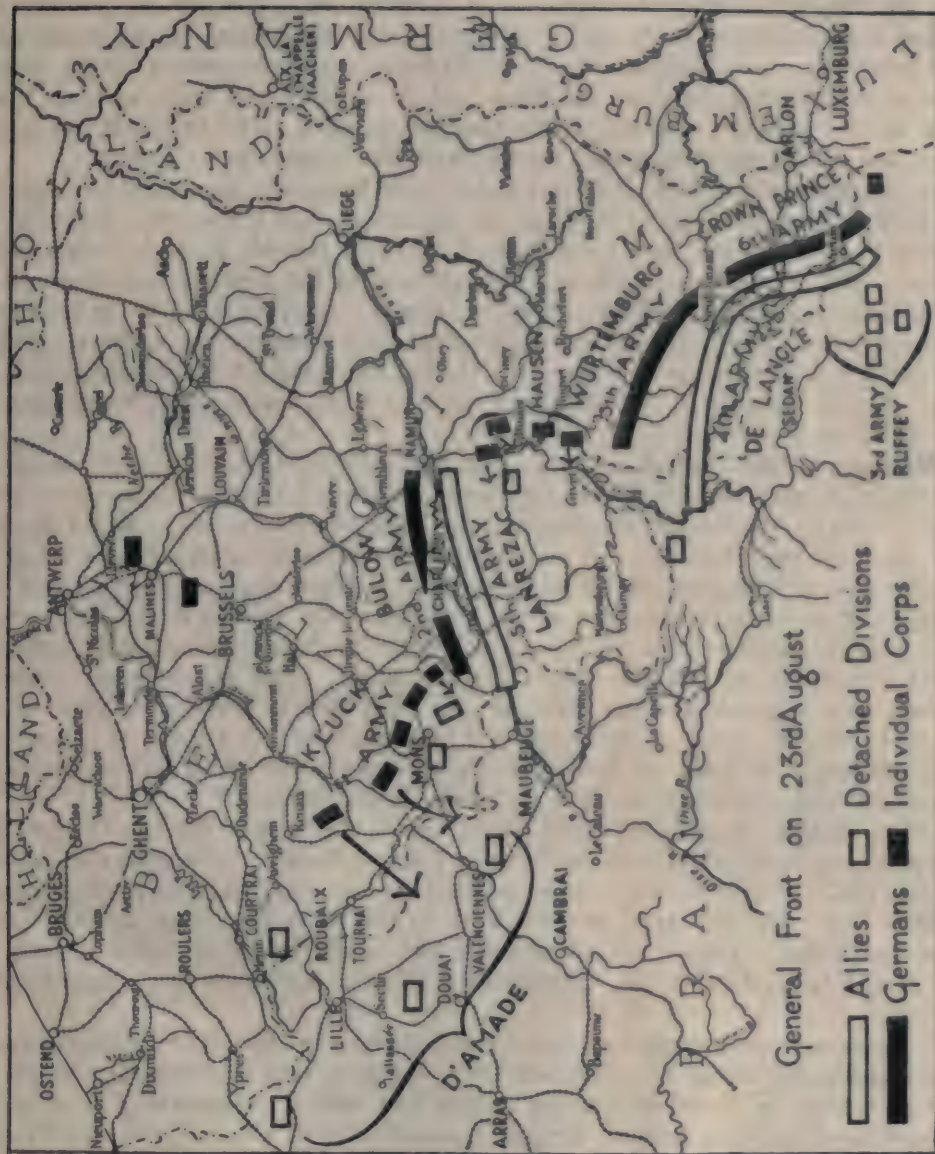
The huge guns were turned on the forts. Fort Maizeret and Fort Marchevette, the two easternmost forts, which guarded the Meuse before it turns almost at right angles at Namur to flow south, first came under fire. In a short time the forts were reduced to ruins. In an hour some 1,200 shells, a survivor reports, fell upon Fort Maizeret, which fired only ten shots, and these, of course, fell short, as the guns were outranged by the German artillery. When the fire slackened on the night of the 21st the damage was seen to be irreparable. On the next morning the Belgians were cheered by the arrival of the 8th French Brigade under General Mangin, and an attempt was made to relieve the German pressure by an attack. But, despite the heroism of the attempt, the Allies were driven back with heavy loss. The entrenched lines were then evacuated, and some 12,000 Belgian troops contrived to force their way southwards to the French. They were embarked at Rouen for Ostend and were able to reach Antwerp. Three forts were destroyed by about two o'clock on Sunday, 23rd August, and three hours later the Germans began to enter the town.

The Duchess of Sutherland, an eye-witness of the scene, notes how well they sang, "as if well trained for this singing." Well-set-up men, they marched into the town all night long. The defence of Namur, undertaken so gallantly and so confidently, had ministered only to this, the theatrical but undeniably imposing march past of General von Bülow's army.

**The Battle of the Ardennes.**—Meanwhile the 3rd and 4th French Armies had been endeavouring to carry out the rôle assigned them by Joffre, and the battle developed into a number of encounters over a considerable front. The Ardennes country is a most difficult territory to invade. The country is wooded, there are poor paths and short vistas, which make it difficult to observe the enemy and keep touch between different parts of an army. Under such conditions, to which fog added an additional complication, battles tend to be of the nature of surprise encounters, in which small detachments may be cut off and annihilated. On the evening of the 21st Virton was occupied by the French, and on the following day the order was given to press the offensive vigorously.

The confused fighting which took place on this day resulted in some parts of the army advancing and others being compelled to retreat; and though a balance would have pronounced for the French, they had failed to carry out the task assigned them.





General Situation at the Battle of Mons.

The troops advanced with the greatest dash ; but the advance was never in unison. The 66th Brigade penetrated into the Forest of Luchy, and after being heavily shelled was surrounded and almost annihilated. A gap was opened in the line which prompt action alone saved from providing the Germans with a chance of a decisive thrust. The 5th Brigade reached the outskirts of Neufchâteau. The advance was very gallant, but the position could not be maintained, and the remnants of this shattered detachment were compelled to retire. The 3rd Army meanwhile covered the 4th, with General Sarraill's 6th Corps on the flank, and an advance was made towards the little fortress of Longwy, already under the German guns. The Crown Prince had attempted to take the fortress by a *coup de main*, but it held out for a week.

At the end of the day the 4th Army had suffered heavy loss, especially in officers ; but they had inflicted heavier losses on the Germans. And it was determined that though its *rôle* had not been carried out it was still possible it might be accomplished. But on the next morning a new element in the situation was disclosed. Early in the morning the advance guard of Hausen's army attacked the 9th Corps (General Dubois) on the left of the 4th Army, which it threatened to outflank. The 3rd Army began to give ground except on the left where the 6th Corps held its position. Namur had fallen. The 5th Army was in retreat, and in such circumstances the 4th Army could not hope to succeed.

**Maunoury's Flank Attack.**—On the 24th and 25th the two armies were heavily attacked. Hausen was now across the Meuse at Dinant, though Fumay held out until the 25th. On this day the Crown Prince determined to envelop the 3rd Army and cut it off from Verdun. An attack was to be delivered against its flank from the direction of Spincourt. By good fortune one of Maunoury's patrols captured a motor car containing two German officers with the orders for the day. Maunoury secured permission to attack, and operating from a line between Etain and Conflans struck northward against the Crown Prince's flank. With these troops Sarraill skilfully kept in touch, and the Germans were flung back in disorder. Taken completely by surprise, some of the troops fled from the field. A number of prisoners were captured, and Maunoury had brilliantly rehearsed a movement he was destined to attempt later against the flank of the whole German army.

There could be no question about the success of the French ; but the Allies were rapidly falling back on the west, and Maunoury was ordered to retire upon the sector Verdun-Toul. During the night he retired skilfully and established his headquarters at St. Mihiel. The 3rd Army also fell back to the cover of Verdun, and the 4th Army conformed. Joffre's second offensive had failed. What were the reasons ? The French Generalissimo very boldly stated them in his review of six months of the war :—

" There were some faults individual and collective in this affair : imprudences committed under enemy fire, divisions badly engaged, rash deployments and precipitate retreats, a premature wasting of men, and, finally, incompetence of certain of our troops and their leaders in matters connected with the use of artillery and infantry. In consequence of these errors, the enemy, profiting by the difficulty of the ground, was able to draw the maximum of the advantage which the superiority of his subaltern ' cadres ' gave him."

The French armies continued to fall back. A few days later they were able to check the Germans and establish a superiority over him. But Joffre's plans necessitated a general retreat, and the eastern armies had to conform.



## VI. MONS AND THE RETREAT.

ABOUT 3 P.M. on Sunday, 23rd August, the general attack upon the British lines began. It is a significant time and date. Namur had fallen. The Germans were crossing the Meuse at Dinant. The whole plan had collapsed like a house of cards at a puff of wind before the British army came into action. It is very necessary to bear this in mind in view of the terrible experiences of the British force and the criticisms which have been levelled against it.

The British army had been transported across the sea between 9th and 17th August, disembarking chiefly at Boulogne and Havre. It comprised two army corps, a division of cavalry and a cavalry brigade, say about 85,000 men—troops which it is no exaggeration to describe as the best in the world. They had as Commander-in-Chief Sir John French, the distinguished cavalry leader, who had gained fame in the Boer War. Field-Marshal Sir John French \* had long been known as a natural leader. He had the habit of trusting his subordinates. He neither asked nor expected blind adherence to his plans. He treated his generals as General Joffre, under whose supreme command he acted, treated him, pointing out the function he expected them to play, and leaving them a wide margin of liberty as to the tactics they used. But he went further; he discussed with them the position and disposition of the enemy, pointed out the place assigned to each, with its rôle in the main plan, and then left them a large measure of liberty in the carrying out of the particular movement.

He was supported at home by Field-Marshal Earl Kitchener, a born organiser and administrator, who soon became known to the world in a number of new characters. To each soldier he sent a message, which is a classic, not only for the spirit it expresses and suggests, but even as literature.

"You are ordered abroad," it ran, "as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common enemy. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience. Remember that the honour of the British army depends on your individual conduct.

"It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire, but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in this struggle. The operation in which you are engaged will, for the most part, take place in a friendly country, and you can do your own country no better service than in showing yourself in France and Belgium in the true character of a British soldier.

"Be invariably courteous, considerate, and kind. Never do anything likely to injure or destroy property, and always look upon looting as a disgraceful act. You are sure to meet with a welcome and to be trusted; your conduct must justify that welcome and that trust.

"Your duty cannot be done unless your health is sound. So keep constantly on your guard against any excesses. In this new experience you may find temptations both in wine and women. You must entirely resist both temp-

\* Viscount French's book, "1914," should not blind us to the qualities of Sir John French.

tations, and, while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy.

"Do your duty bravely.

"Fear God.

"Honour the King.

"KITCHENER, *Field-Marshal*."

Lord Kitchener outlined his policy for the conduct of the war, on 25th August, in the following words :—

"The empires with whom we are at war have called to the colours almost the entire male population. The principle we on our part shall observe is this : that while their maximum force undergoes a constant diminution, the reinforcements we shall prepare shall steadily and increasingly flow out until we have an army in the field which in numbers, not less than in quality, will be not unworthy of the power and responsibilities of the British Empire."

This was the policy of a statesman, not a soldier ; and those who studied the movements of troops as the war progressed saw how wisely and faithfully the plan was carried out, and it may be said, without any risk that history will reverse the verdict, that Lord Kitchener was almost invariably right in big things.

The very day it was announced that the Expeditionary Force had arrived in France a most unfortunate and distressing event occurred. General Sir James Grierson, who had been appointed to command the 2nd Army Corps, died of heart disease in the train. He was a distinguished soldier, and knew more of the strength and weakness of the German army than any other British soldier. In his place was appointed General Sir H. Smith-Dorrien, who had made his reputation with the commander of the 1st Army Corps, Sir Douglas Haig, and with the Commander-in-Chief in the South African War. He had attracted public notice when, as commander at Aldershot, he had instituted a system of putting the men on their honour as to good behaviour. It was a significant and momentous choice, as events fell out, for on his section of the British line the flower of the German army was flung time and again in overwhelming numbers for many consecutive days, and General Smith-Dorrien, it may be fairly said, won an imperishable name in that searching trial.

The British army operating in France did not work as an independent unit. It was part of the Allied army, a very small, though a significant and valuable fraction of the Franco-British force. In this conflict it must never be forgotten that on land the French bore ever the brunt of the attack, fighting many engagements on the vast battle line from the Belgian coast to Basle, and holding up the huge German forces. The last time a British contingent had fought in this subservient position was during the Seven Years' War, a campaign which, strangely enough, bears many curious resemblances to this war.

The bulk of the Expeditionary Force was landed at Boulogne and Havre. It passed from the British shores in mystery and silence. Though the arrival of various units was announced in many Continental papers, no news leaked out in Great Britain. The men were heartened for their setting-out by no enthusiastic send-off. The King, it is true, went to Aldershot on 11th August to bid them "God speed," but no comment connected his Majesty's visit with the troops' departure.

The perilous voyage accomplished—the more perilous for every added mile which the ships had to traverse of sea which might be thronged with the enemy's sub-



marines, or sown with his mines—the troops landed in France amid scenes of great enthusiasm. Seasoned men they were, with the memory of battles and campaigns in other countries, yet men having fresh within them the spirit that barrack life seems to preserve and foster, the spirit of youth. Flowers were thrown upon them. They were kissed and petted, and robbed of their buttons and regimental badges. They contrived to enter into the new conditions with the same sort of useful and whimsical adaptability which acclimatised them so quickly to other and more tragic conditions later on.

They were happy and cheerful and tuneful. They heartened themselves by the sad and sentimental lilt of a popular song, as the true "Tommy" has ever done. "It's a long, long way to Tipperary" was the classic processional on this occasion. They made jokes about the transport wagons, which bore familiar British legends connected with Messrs. Bass, Hartley's jam, and so on. They chaffed each other about missing the last bus when a familiar motor omnibus ran up; and so went forth to battle.

"The French official announcement," says the Paris correspondent of the *Times*, "declares that his remarks on landing betrayed the consciousness that he is engaged in a struggle for the progress, civilisation, and liberty of Europe and the principles of humanity." Tommy put this in a different way. "'E's" ("E" being the Emperor William) "gettin' a bit too thick, and it's time 'e was stopped." That, in a nutshell, was the psychology of the British soldier, a man who took up his profession of arms voluntarily—as the officers of all armies do—and consequently saw a good many years' service stopping divers men when they got "too thick."

**Mons.**—The concentration of Sir John French's force was practically complete on the evening of Friday, 21st August, and during the next day the troops were moved up to the positions which he had chosen in furtherance of the rôle set out for them in General Joffre's plan. The line extended from Condé, in France, along the canal to Mons, in Belgium, and thence to Binche, some ten miles from Charleroi. The line made an obtuse angle at Mons, and formed the awkward salient of Nimy. From Condé to Mons was occupied by the 2nd Corps, with the Royal Fusiliers and 4th Middlesex holding the Nimy salient in advance of Mons; from Mons to Binche was held by the 1st Corps, and the 5th Cavalry Brigade was placed at Binche. The cavalry division, under General Allenby, who later won an enduring place in history for his campaign in Palestine and Syria, was held in reserve. The 2nd Army Corps had thus to hold a line about twice the length of that upon which the 1st was drawn up, the explanation being that Sir John French "was aware of no outflanking movement by the enemy." And the opening of the Mons conflict seemed to justify the disposition of forces, for the first shock fell upon the right of the 1st Army Corps.

This was not the first contact of the British with the enemy. Brigadier-General Sir Philip Chetwode, with the 5th Cavalry Brigade, had been engaged on the preceding day in the forward reconnaissance. Some of the cavalry rode as far north as Soignies, and had many encounters with the enemy. "We have been through the Uhlans like brown paper," wrote Sir Philip Chetwode later on, and the expressive phrase aptly crystallises an ascendancy which the British cavalry early achieved and maintained over the German horse. These reconnaissances, confirmed by the British aeroplanes, seemed to bear out the information of the French headquarters that the British line was threatened by "one, or at most two, of the enemy's army corps, with perhaps one cavalry division."

The British, therefore, looked forward to meeting the enemy at first, at any rate,

on fairly easy terms, perhaps at a superiority, or at the worst at such slight odds that Sir John French,\* although he had not neglected to survey a suitable position in the rear to be held in the event of his being driven to retreat, must have felt reasonably sanguine of his ability to carry out the rôle assigned him.

But the British Commander-in-Chief had been misinformed by the French, who had themselves misconceived the German disposition. The official French *communiqué* says that the French army operating on the Sambre was attacking "the German right." It was the right centre. The French did not come into contact with the right. Sir John French was not informed until 5 P.M. on Sunday that the French had not succeeded in holding the passages of the Sambre. The French had been attempting all the day to retrieve their failure of the previous day. They fought with the utmost gallantry, but they were outnumbered. The Germans were in much stronger force than the Allied commander thought, and at five o'clock the two reserve French divisions and the 5th French Army began to fall back.

In conveying this information to Sir John French by telegraph, General Joffre added that at least three German army corps were moving on the front of the British position, and another threatened the flank from Tournai. The British had been under fire some two hours by this time. The attack on the salient made by the canal loop about Mons began at 9 A.M., and for six hours the troops held fast against an onslaught of much superior numbers. Lieutenant Dease of the Fusiliers, who commanded the machine gun which protected Nimy Bridge, had been five times wounded. When unable to walk, he was picked up by Lieutenant Steele on the order to retire from the Nimy salient at 3 P.M. Steele's gallantry was unavailing, for Dease died; he was posthumously awarded the V.C. But this engagement sinks into insignificance measured by the immediate menace of the onslaught of the 1st German Army. The French had begun to retire, and the British position was serious. Smith-Dorrien's corps had been heavily engaged, and though the men gave the Germans a rude shock it was only the bungling of Kluck which saved them. If Kluck had flung his whole army on the British line at once nothing could have saved it. When Joffre's news came to the British commander the right had already retired to the south of Bray and the cavalry from Binche, which the Germans at once occupied. Sir John French sent his aeroplanes to endeavour to confirm General Joffre's information, and as a result he determined to retire at daybreak to the position with its right on the fortress of Maubeuge and its left on Jenlain, which he had previously reconnoitred.

Fighting had continued during the whole night, though the 2nd Army Corps seems on the whole to have retained its positions. The 3rd Division had been withdrawn behind Mons at dark. The 1st Corps now lay round Harmignies, and, under cover of a feint to recapture Binche from Harmignies, the 2nd Corps fell back. On its new line, much shorter in extent, the 2nd Corps entrenched, and covered the retirement of the 1st Corps to the new line Bavai-Maubeuge, which was reached in the evening. Meanwhile the German offensive mainly threatened the British left, and General Allenby with the Cavalry Division was sent to act in front of the left flank to relieve the pressure.

\* It is necessary to state that, after a careful examination of Lord French's "1914," I find it impossible to resist the conclusion that his dispatches are more reliable. They are at least a reasonable account. The book is frequently inconsequent, and not seldom contradictory; and its effect is to paint his action as so glaringly incompetent that I am bound to ignore it.



**The Retreat.**—The great retreat had begun. The forces threatening the 2nd Army Corps under Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien were at least three to one. The Cavalry Division attempted to relieve the flank, and it was during this operation that General de Lisle, in making an attack upon the German flank with the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, rode into a barbed-wire defence which had been cleverly prepared about 500 yards from the apparently unguarded lines. The cavalry had to retire, and the 9th Lancers and 18th Hussars suffered heavy loss. Yet, with the help of



the cavalry and the steadiness and gallantry of his troops, Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, in spite of vigorous and incessant attacks from such superior odds, had taken his army corps to the new position. Its right joined the 1st Army Corps at Bavai, its left lay on Jenlain. Here were drawn up the 19th Infantry Brigade, which had been brought from the line of communications, and beyond lay the cavalry.

It is not to be thought that the Germans secured this advantage without paying for it. The advance proved a much more costly undertaking for them than the retreat for the British. But the German pressure was maintained during the whole

time, as indeed it was for many days to come. Nothing in history is comparable to the incredible swiftness of the German advance. An army, as an army, and not merely as advance patrols, marches when unopposed about ten to twelve miles per day. For several days the whole northern German line marched forward, maintaining its full weight and pressure on the retreating Allies, at an average rate of fifteen miles per day. At this incredible speed the fighting line advanced. The retreating armies were well-nigh exhausted after the first day's retreat, but it was to be continued for nearly three days without cessation.

Sir John French, on 24th August, found that the French were still retiring, and that his only support was the fortress of Maubeuge, against which he was convinced the Germans were trying to pin him, so that, after surrounding the British troops, they might be forced to surrender. This was the first of three critical days. Already the Germans were boasting that they had the British in a "ring of steel." It was a good phrase and a pleasant dream, but it did not represent the actual state of affairs.

**Landrecies.**—The British commander quickly realised that he must retire without delay, although his troops were almost exhausted. Amade's French troops were powerless to hold up or even check such a force as pressed forward in this movement. It was an isolated though gallant attempt to check the fierce German move. In the early morning of 25th August the British retirement was continued towards Le Cateau. A new division under General Snow had by this time become available, and, operating south of Solesmes, helped to secure the retreat. Throughout the day and well into the evening the 1st Army Corps continued its retirement, and reached the line Le Cateau-Landrecies by 10 P.M. The two corps had retired, through a Staff oversight, on either side of the Forest of Mormal, and there was a gap of six miles between them. The 1st Corps had hardly reached Landrecies before they were attacked from the north-east by the Germans issuing from the Forest of Mormal. The conflict took place in the streets of the town, where the 4th Guards Brigade took up defensive positions and inflicted heavy loss on the Germans as they issued from the forest into the narrow streets. Sir John French, finding his right so hard pressed and his troops in such an exhausted condition, sent urgent appeals to the French commander on his right, and the French eventually came to his assistance.

In the night Sir Douglas Haig, with the help of the French, extricated his corps from its critical position. Meanwhile the 2nd Corps had reached the Le Cateau line earlier, but its western extremity, which was held by the 4th Division, was bent back. This division was added to Sir H. Smith-Dorrien's command. The cavalry during this retreat had become scattered, but by the early morning of the most critical day of the retreat, the 26th, General Allenby had reorganised them and concentrated two brigades south of Cambrai, to the west of the British line.

On 26th August the Germans made their most vigorous effort to outflank and envelop the British force. The method of outflanking which, forcing the defenders to fight on two fronts, aims at turning a retreat into a rout, or, by surrounding them, into a final surrender, was wisely favoured by the Germans as serious students of the science of warfare. The alternative method of destroying the cohesion of an army and dividing its force by breaking its line at some selected point is not only more costly, but has also the disadvantage that a dexterous commander may bring up reinforcements, and the force aiming at breaking his line finds itself in immediate and very grave danger of being itself surrounded.



**Le Cateau.**—General von Kluck determined, on 26th August, to make a last determined effort for the time being; for it is clear that the finest and best-disciplined troops in the world cannot keep up such a pace of fighting for long. The German commander knew that the British must be exhausted; he thought a good proportion had taken refuge in Maubeuge, and he felt that a final attack in such circumstances must be successful. Against any other troops the move must have been successful. The bulk of the German force was hurled against the west of the British line, held by General Snow with the 4th Division. "The guns of four German army corps were in position against them," and, outmatched by such a superiority in guns and by odds of three to one in infantry, General Smith-Dorrien, who had been ordered to continue the retreat at daybreak, informed Sir John French that he judged it impossible in face of such an attack.

The 1st Corps lay six miles away, and, in any case, was held by the German troops, so Sir John French ordered General Smith-Dorrien to retire at the earliest possible moment, as it was impossible to send any help. Sir John French had already appealed to General Sordet, who was on his right flank, to come to his assistance with the three French cavalry divisions, and the French general, who had already been engaged for three weeks, gave assistance which it is difficult to over-estimate in the later stages of the battle.

The British artillery fought splendidly. One of the British batteries on the right had lost all its officers and men except one subaltern and two gunners; but these "continued to serve one gun, kept up a sound rate of fire, and came unhurt from the battlefield." Indeed, every arm of the troops threw itself heroically into the struggle; but at 3.30 P.M. the enveloping movement had been so strongly developed, and the position was so critical, that, to avoid "complete annihilation," the order was given to retire. The retreat was covered by the artillery and cavalry, and "fortunately the enemy had himself suffered too heavily to engage in an energetic pursuit." By the end of this day the British had lost in dead, wounded, and missing nearly 8,000 men, and 36 guns had to be abandoned.

In reporting this movement in his dispatch, Sir John French says:—

"I cannot close this brief account of this glorious stand of the British troops without putting on record my deep appreciation of the valuable services rendered by General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien. I say without hesitation that the saving of the left wing of the army under my command on the morning of the 26th August could never have been accomplished unless a commander of rare and unusual coolness, intrepidity, and determination had been present to personally conduct the operation." Sir John French was clearly a better judge than Lord French.

This great stand, which beyond a doubt saved the Allies from disaster in the West, will take rank as one of the great military achievements of history. The British army was all this time forming the flank of the Allied army, and if it had been annihilated, as the Germans designed, the whole French line would have been turned and the envelopment from the west would have begun.

To have fought against such numbers of splendidly trained soldiers, handled vigorously according to a plan worked out to the most minute details; to have fought against the inevitable discouragement of continuous retreat and the consequent disorder it entails; to have fought against exhaustion and weariness from marching under a terrible sun and from lack of proper food and water; and to have preserved its cohesion, its spirit, its vigour, is an achievement which entitles the British army

to rank for ever among the finest soldiers the world has ever produced. Letters and diaries found on the persons of German officers, still more the pause after this critical day, testify to the wholesome respect the army had impressed upon the Germans.

On the two following days the British had the help of General Sordet, who with his cavalry drove back the Germans on Cambrai, and General d'Amade, who with two French infantry divisions, threatened a counter-enveloping movement. The British retreat was much relieved by this help; but it must not be forgotten that "the glorious stand of the British troops" on the 26th was entirely unsupported, and that on these days since the Battle of Mons they successfully guarded the whole Allied line from an enveloping movement urged with the greatest violence and overwhelming numbers. They were in fact the rearguard of the Allied army; and whereas rearguards stand and then fall back for another detachment to take their place, the British army for six days had no respite.

Every branch of the army had distinguished itself; but the airmen, taking part in actual warfare for the first time, won special praise from the British Commander-in-Chief. They flew in all weathers; they fought in the air, destroying five of the enemy's machines; and, "fired at constantly both by friend and foe," they brought in most complete and accurate information.

On 29th August the British position was further relieved by the formation of the 6th French Army to the left of the British lines. General Maunoury had been called two days before from Lorraine to take command. The 5th German Army was drawn up between La Fère and Guise. General Joffre visited Sir John French on this day, and informed him of the steps ordered to relieve his troops. The 5th French Army had been ordered to move forward against the Germans. Owing to the continued retreat Sir John French felt that by this time his line of communications with Havre was endangered, and accordingly he gave orders to move it farther south, to the mouth of the Loire at St. Nazaire.

**Guise.**—The 5th French Army carried out its counter-offensive with such ability and force that, in the battle which developed south of Guise, it drove back with heavy loss and in disorder two German army corps—the Prussian Guard and 10th Corps. General Lanrezac's first intention had been to turn westward upon St. Quentin, but when all the orders had been issued the pressure on his right caused him to turn back towards the north with the bulk of his army. The left flank was forced to give way, but the 10th and 1st Corps on the right inflicted heavy loss on the Germans east of Guise.

General Joffre proposed to follow up this advantage. The Eastern and Central Armies were holding their own, and no doubt Joffre did not wish to abandon more French territory. But Sir John French stated that a further retreat was inevitable, and a general retirement to the line of the Marne was ordered for the whole of the Allied line. A new (the 9th) French army had been formed, and moved up into the space between the 5th and 4th Armies on the British right. The Franco-British line retired steadily, under the constant pressure of German forces. Rear-guard actions took place continually, but they were of a much less desperate character than up to the 27th.

Meanwhile, although the fiercest battles were being engaged upon the left of the Allied line, the Germans were nowhere inactive. On 24th August Lunéville was taken. Four days later the Crown Prince's army, which had been held up before



the obsolete fortress Longwy, at length succeeded in reducing it ; but the French were able to check his advance. In the Lorraine and Vosges region, after the reverses of 20th and 21st August, the French troops had re-formed, and to their resistance the success at the Battle of the Marne is largely due.\*

Everywhere, except on the eastern frontier, the Germans were advancing ; and as Sir John French † held that " the British forces could not effectively fulfil their share " in an immediate counter-offensive " for some days," it was impossible for the Allies to impose any decisive check upon the enemy.

The weather had been extraordinarily fine, but the sun, beating down from cloudless skies, made the forced marches trying to all the soldiers, and the continued retreat could not but have its effect upon their spirits. By 1st September the Allied line ran through Beauvais, Compiègne, La Fère, Guise, Vervins, Mézières, Sedan, Verdun, and so along the line of fortresses.

## VII. TANNENBERG.

THE Russian invasion of East Prussia was a challenge to Germany which under the circumstances she could not refuse to accept. The squires of the Kaiser's favourite province called for relief and vengeance, and they did not call in vain. With the most admirable decision plans were laid for the deliverance of the harried territory. General Hindenburg, already old enough to have retired, was summoned to command the army which was rapidly being concentrated in the south. He had made a special study of the tactical features of the terrain, and when the draining of the marshes had been mooted had strongly and successfully opposed the scheme on the ground that it would rob a province which made a salient into Russian territory of one of its best defensive features. Apart from this there seems to have been little to commend him to the German Staff. He had one rare quality. He not only knew his limitations, he also knew when he was well served and when to let well alone. He became later the idol of the German people. But the success of the many campaigns in which he was engaged was wholly due to his Chief of Staff, a competent brigadier, who had distinguished himself in the operations at Liège.

General Ludendorff was a different character. He had a vast driving power and a tremendous capacity for absorbing and assimilating detail. If this be genius, he had it. But he lacked almost every quality of the great military geniuses. He was almost incapable, as indeed were nearly all the German generals, of making that intuitive decision in crises which seems so like a leap in the dark. But he loved power and was content with the substance, while his chief had the shadow. He became the evil genius of Germany, and was the most sinister figure in the war.

When Ludendorff reached East Prussia he speedily saw his chance and seized it. Two great Russian armies, meant to act together, were strung out loosely over the country with hardly a pretence at united action. Their bases were far apart, and they were hazarding their safety like gamblers. Their combined strength was such that the German Staff seriously considered withdrawing behind the Vistula. Ludendorff, feeling, quite rightly, that the Germans could never hold that line, decided to attack.

\* See p. 88.

† He even mooted retiring " towards " his base (" 1914," p. 94).

In the last week of August the 8th German Army moved against Samsonoff's army, which had pushed too far forward in the southern area of East Prussia after the Russian success at Gumbinnen. With Samsonoff was General Pestitch of the General Staff. The Russian force had lost touch with Rennenkampf's army operating in East Prussia, and was lying in the neighbourhood of Osterode and Allenstein, with the 13th and 15th Corps in the centre and a corps lying on each flank, nearly a day's march distant from the heads of the central columns. The railway was in German hands, and Hindenburg, seizing his chance, rapidly withdrew two corps from in front of Rennenkampf, leaving only two cavalry brigades, and began to bear upon the flanks of the Russians. His object was twofold. He wished to confuse the Russians, and then to drive them into the region of woods and lakes which is characteristic of East Prussia towards the frontier.

He was entirely successful. The Battle of Tannenberg was almost a foregone conclusion as soon as von Hindenburg had been allowed to concentrate his forces against the Russians. The Russians fought with desperate courage, but were taken at a disadvantage, which sheds little credit on the Russian reconnaissance in this engagement. First the southern flank at Neidenburg—the chief line of retreat—and then the northern flank at Ortelsburg were driven in, and the envelopment of the central corps was complete except for the treacherous marshland. Here, under a terrible and persistent rain of shrapnel and the dull thunder of the heavy guns for five days and nights, the troops became demoralised and lost coherence. The gallant Samsonoff was lost in the woods at night and heard of no more; and Generals Pestitch and Martos (commander of the 15th Corps) were also among the casualties.

No help came from the flank corps, which retired before being fully engaged, nor from Rennenkampf, who could have annihilated the Germans if he had moved down upon their flank. But he remained ignorant of his colleague's peril and left him to disaster. He did not even know that the German troops were being moved south for the operations against Samsonoff. It was later reported that in crises Rennenkampf always lost his head, and his headquarters were in confusion.

It was known later that Martos was reserved to provide moral stimulus for the German people. In irons he was taken to Halle and dramatically court-martialed for his alleged orders to burn the houses and shoot the civilians in East Prussia. A hint from the Russians that the precedent would be remembered opened the eyes of the Germans, so that they were able to see that no evidence could be found against the unfortunate general, and he was acquitted.

Ludendorff's inspired gamble was the most decisive battle of the first phase of the war. The Germans at first announced that they had taken 30,000 prisoners; but day by day detached bodies wandering helpless about the swamps were captured, and in a few days the number had swelled to about 90,000. The other casualties were also heavy, and only about 80,000 of an army, which must have totalled nearly 250,000, escaped. It was one of the most decisive defeats in the whole war. Samsonoff's army, as an army, no longer existed. It was long before the weary and starving soldiers made their way back to the Russian lines.

Hindenburg lost no time in following up his victory. Retribution fell upon Rennenkampf, who, according to Gourko's account, left his army to its fate and motored to Kovno. The siege of Königsberg had to be raised, and to escape the threat to his southern flank he had to retire with the greatest speed. This was not accomplished without the abandonment of material and appreciable loss.



The Russians had suffered a heavy reverse, but at the very moment Hindenburg was bringing off this *coup* Ruzsky and Brussiloff were nearing the walls of Lemberg and inflicting similar losses on the Austrians.

### VIII. THE AUSTRIAN DEBACLE.

"Among the suspicions aroused by the sudden and violent resolution of Austria, the most disquieting is that Germany should have pushed her on to aggressive action against Serbia in order to be able herself to enter into war with Russia and France, in circumstances which she supposes ought to be most favourable to herself and under conditions which have been thoroughly considered."—[From the dispatch of the French Ambassador at Vienna, July 28, 1914, to the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs. Translation published by British Government.]

MEANWHILE Germany's ally had been reaping the whirlwind. A large proportion of one of her provinces was just as much at the mercy of the conqueror as was Belgium. The position of Austria-Hungary in the war and in the events which led up to it was one which called for qualities of humility and subservience, and the call upon these qualities increased as the war extended. Austria-Hungary was in the strange position of a Power challenging two States, one of whom possessed indefinite resources, without the force to make her challenge good. She was fully warned that Russia would interfere if she attacked Serbia, and yet she had not the power to defeat or even seriously hamper Serbia's champion. She had been assured by Germany that all would be well. In the optimistic minds of those who controlled Germany's military policy a plan had been formed for dealing with Russia if she should, against their expectations, make war. It did not demand the conquest of Russia. Even the Germans could see that that was merely a wild dream and would ever remain a dream. What the Germans proposed was this: to inspire Russia with such a wholesome respect for German-Austrian prowess that the Slav Power would in the end desist from attacks which proved powerless to inflict harm, and be made to see the wisdom of coming to an understanding with her antagonists.

It must be said at once that the plan, like most of the German plans, had a good deal of plausibility in it. But it depended upon the production of a conviction in the mind of Russia that she could not succeed or hope to succeed in dealing a serious blow at Germany or Austria-Hungary; and such a conviction could only be induced by checks and defeats of the Russian arms.

The burden of supplying these foundation stones of the German plan fell of necessity chiefly on the Austrian army during the early part of the war. Germany had the bulk of her troops engaged in "beating France to her knees," and the most sanguine knew that the accomplishment of this feat would occupy at least a few weeks. As a matter of fact it took a month to bring France to the curtsey, and there had been no sign that she would be disposed to kneel in the near future. During this period Germany and Austria were to try to engage the attention of Russia. Germany's share in this operation amounted, as we have seen, to a demonstration characterised with the now familiar brutality of her military tactics, and no more. The descent of Generals Rennenkampf and Samsonoff upon East Prussia and the investing of Königsberg were too shrewdly conceived to allow the German troops





Tomaszow. Its commander, General Ruzsky, was a soldier who had seen service in Manchuria. He was sixty years of age, a keen student and something of a scholar, with a touch of the personal magnetism which attracts and influences men. The second army, concealed until the last moment by a skilful screen of Cossacks, was moving up from the south. General Brussiloff, its commander, a bold and sure leader, had with him General Radko Dimitrieff, the Bulgarian commander who had won fame in the Turko-Balkan War. He offered his services to Russia, and was given a command in this first movement against Austria.

By the end of the third week in August the Russians were over the Galician frontier, Ruzsky had taken Rawaruska, and Brussiloff was at Tarnopol and had secured several crossings of the river Sereth. At Tarnopol the Russians carried the Austrian position by a frontal attack. After repeated bayonet charges the Austrians fell back and left the Russians in possession of this important frontier town and railway junction, which lies between sixty and seventy miles south-east of Lemberg. The Russian armies, at this point, were marching almost at right angles to each other, and their objective still seemed not to be guessed by the Austrian Staff.

A few days later the armies were in contact and Ruzsky took command of the operations. The Austrians now, when it was too late, saw the immediate peril in which their right wing lay. It was realised that here was no mere threat to the flank, but an attack which might threaten the whole of their armies. Brussiloff was not merely threatening the Austrian rear, and Ruzsky was flying at higher game than the Austrian centre. The two were taking part in a combined attack on the ancient city of Lemberg, with its fine buildings, beautiful churches, and thriving industries. And with the capital of Galicia they meant to seize the whole province, the largest in Austria-Hungary, with its not remote memories of Russian rule. Inevitably, if successful, they would cut the Austrian armies in Poland off from their base, and the end might be complete disaster.

On 27th August the main Russian army was at Busk, and on the following day Brussiloff's army from Brzezany threw back the forces in front of him, and Ruzsky on the 29th delivered a smashing blow on two army corps which had been thrown forward to Zloczow. The attack on the whole front now began, and continued without cessation until the fall of Lemberg. In hilly country the Russians pressed their way, every step contested, to their goal. Brussiloff's army began an attack on the fortified town of Halicz, once a Russian principality, on the last day of the month. This was the southern pivot of the Austrian army, and was an obstacle which was expected to hold up indefinitely against the enemy. Standing at the confluence of the Dniester and Luckhow it has strong natural fortifications, and the river obstacle was held to be no slight barrier. From Halicz, it is said, were drawn some of the Austrian siege guns which did such damage to the Belgian fortresses.

The Russian heavy siege artillery played great havoc with the Halicz forts, and the Russian infantry were irresistible. Time after time they flung themselves against the Austrians, and after two days of this terrible assault the Austrian lines were broken and Halicz fell into Russian hands. In the meantime Ruzsky had closed in upon Lemberg, and when the southern army moved up from Halicz the Austrians were thrown back upon the city from the north, east, and south. Here the Russian howitzers and almost more terrible Russian bayonet again had full play. The Russian heavy guns dominated the Austrian artillery, and the infantry, fired by a victorious march, swept forward with redoubled fury. The first defensive line

was carried, and then against a deadly hail of bullets from machine guns and field artillery the Russians flung themselves against the second line. The Austrians broke and fell back. The retreat became a rout, and Lemberg with all its rich stores came once more into Russian hands. Besides guns and stores of all kinds, about 40,000 prisoners were taken; and about 11 o'clock in the morning of 3rd September the victorious Russians marched into the city amid the great enthusiasm of the inhabitants. The people were Slavs, the prisoners were mostly Slavs, and in the retreat there was a disposition to put the Slav soldiers of Austria in the rearward so that they might bear the weight of the shock. The Austro-Hungarian problem had speedily come to the critical point.

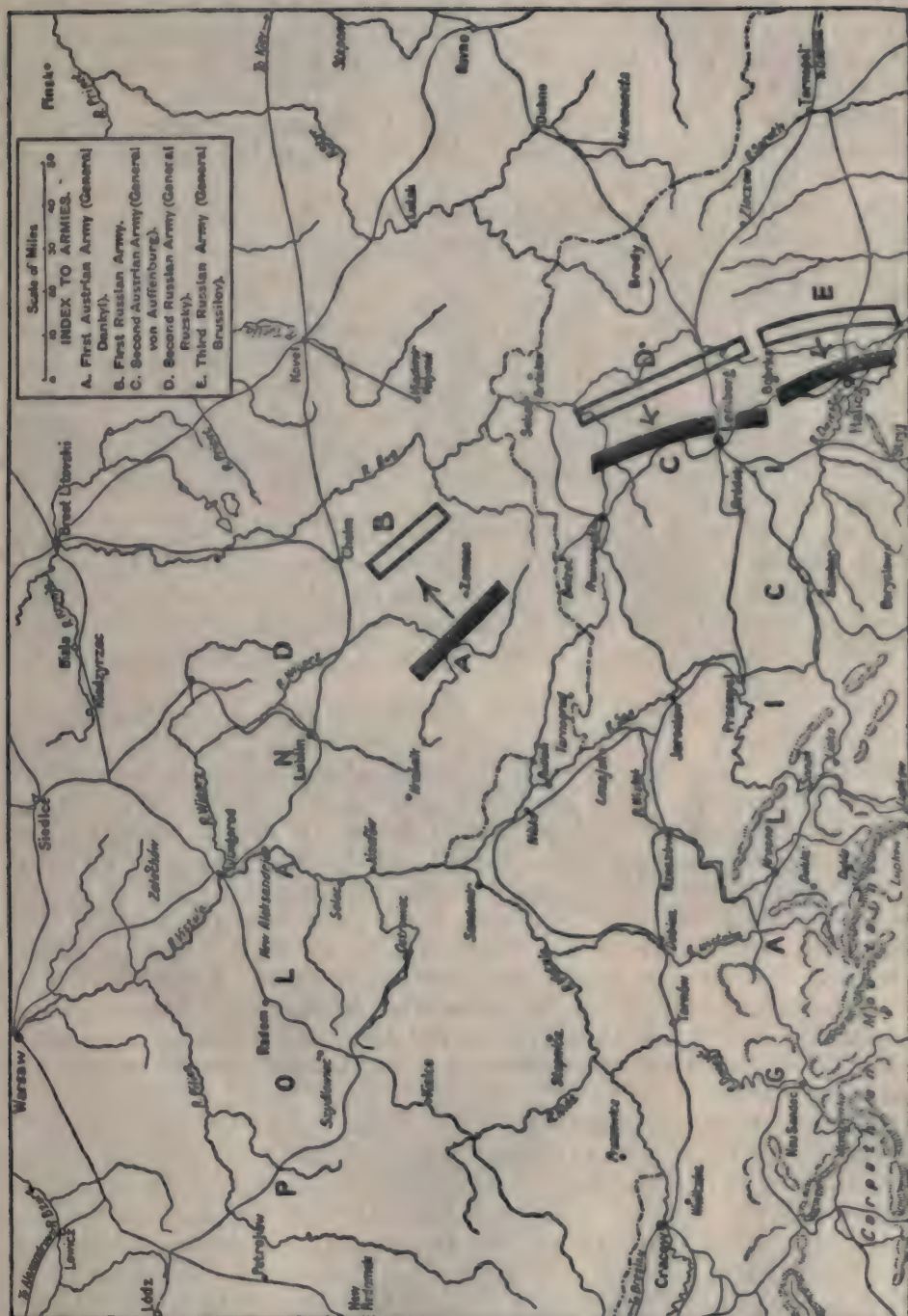
Ruszký at once marched with his force, which had had scarcely any rest for a week, to take the main Austrian army in the rear, while Brussiloff swept the broken ranks from Lemberg before him. In this Eastern Galician campaign already 70,000 prisoners had been taken and vast numbers of guns. This is merely to mention the more material side of the Russian victory. Politically, it was of immense importance that the chief city of the Slav province and the whole of Eastern Galicia should be once more under a Russian governor-general.

Its military importance was very much greater. The invasion of Galicia was dictated by two motives. The Russian Staff intended, with the help of their Allies, to reduce Germany; and as the Germans had for forty years been encouraged to believe they were so far superior to every other nation that they were in effect invincible, the Russians aimed at seizing Berlin. That, while it would not end the war, would be of the utmost importance in demonstrating to the Germans that their dream was far from the order of reality. But in recent years in highly organised states the heart of a country is not the political and administrative centre, it is the centre of its industrial activity. Such a centre was Silesia, and Galicia provided the shortest road to Silesia.\* The neutrality of Belgium had been violated for a road, the shortest road to Paris. The invasion of Galicia was undertaken for the shortest road into Silesia. Indeed, there is a striking parallel between the Western German army marching upon Paris astride the main railway, which was to be the chief means of keeping the invading force in being, and the Russian march through Galicia along the main line to Breslau, the capital of Silesia. But the invasion of Galicia was motivated by another end. The main Russian army's line of approach to Berlin lay through Poland towards the fortress Posen. A march undertaken in this direction would have on its north East Prussia, and on its south Galicia. The Russians could not safely march with an unbeaten enemy on its flanks; and hence East Prussia and Galicia had to be cleared. But while the East Prussian campaign was a means to an end, the Galician campaign was both a means and an end.

There was no rest for the Russian soldiers. While they had been fighting in Galicia the centre and left of the Austrian army had not been passive. They appealed to the Germans for help, but Ludendorff could not attack the Narev line as was suggested, and the German reinforcements were not numerous. Nearly half went to stiffen the shattered army in Galicia. The others reinforced the Austrian left and left centre, strengthening the hands of General Dankl. The army, already

\* The main Russian strategy has been criticised. It is held that the Grand Duke Nicholas should have struck through Poland at Germany. But it is forgotten that, if the Russians could have made good their hold upon Silesia, their problem in Poland would have been solved. On the Galician front alone were the communications sufficient to support great armies. The Russian failure was due to lack of arms and munitions, not to faulty strategy. Ludendorff described the Grand Duke as a really great strategist.





## The Russian Invasion of Galicia.

formidable, was thus, in the critical engagements in Poland, so far as numbers went, more than a match for the Russian forces available against it, and it is reported that two army corps had been withdrawn from East Prussia to strengthen the Russian front. But it was in its leading that the Austrian army suffered most. There seems to have been no well-conceived plan of action. The Austrians had, by entering Poland, assumed the offensive; but their tactics seem to savour more of a defensive with sporadic counter-attacks. Austrian strategy had been reduced even at this point to opportunism.

While Dimitrieff was attacking north of Halicz and Brussiloff was throwing his whole energy into the reduction of the fortress, an Austrian force on the west of the Vistula was marching from Radom against Ivangorod, some thirty miles to the north-east. It met with a decided check and retreated, crossing the river to Dankl's army at Opole. The Russian troops from Ivangorod were thus left master of the west of the Vistula, a position they turned to good account in the critical assault on the Austrian position. A little later, on the day when Brussiloff and Ruzsky were shepherding the eastern arm of the Austrian forces under the defences of Lemberg, before the final attack on the Galician capital, an attempt was made to drive in the Russian centre between Lublin and Cholm. This was also unsuccessful, and the Russians took 1,000 prisoners.

The day after the fall of Lemberg, when the tireless Ruzsky was on his way to take the Austrian main army in the rear, the general Russian advance between the Vistula and the Bug began. Fierce fighting took place between Lublin and Cholm, and another attempt to pierce the Russian lines by the 10th Austrian Army Corps was repulsed with heavy losses. In following up the retreating enemy the Russians took 5,000 prisoners.

On 6th September, Ruzsky fell upon Auffenberg's army. The Austrians were at this time strongly entrenched on a line extending from the Vistula at Opole through Zamosc, Tomaszow, Rawaruska to Grudek, a Galician fortress about eighteen miles west of Lemberg. Battle was joined upon this day over the whole front of over one hundred miles, and with particular vehemence at Grudek and Rawaruska. The German reinforcements were now at hand, and the effect of their arrival was at once apparent in renewed attempts upon the Russian positions. The main Russian force, however, ably commanded by General Ivanoff, with General Alexeieff as Chief of Staff, never lost control of the situation, and waited for the best moment to crush the enemy. The Austrian attacks were severally defeated. A night attack towards Rawaruska cost the enemy 500 prisoners in addition to their other casualties. A German division which, on the west of the Vistula, made a new attack in the neighbourhood of Ivangorod was also defeated, and the Germans crossed the river and joined Dankl's army.

On the 9th the Russians shot their bolt. Dankl's army, unwisely induced to leave their strong entrenchments in eager pursuit of their prey, were thrown back with heavy loss, and the Russians, pressing forward, carried the trenches and pierced the Austrian line at Krasnik. Giving the Austro-Germans no time to recover and re-form, the main body, instead of pursuing Dankl's troops, turned on the Germans' now exposed flank at Turobin. This fortified height was carried with great loss to the Germans both in men and artillery. The beaten troops fell back upon Annopol on the Vistula. Here, again, the enlightened leading of the Russians was paramount in the new situation. The bulk of the Russian force at once fell upon Auffen-



berg's army. This part of the Austrian line was now in a position of deadly peril. With Ruszky pressing at Tomaszow, and the main Russian body attacking in front and on the exposed left flank, the Austrians were almost surrounded. They refused to surrender; they were not wanting in courage, but in the engagement which ensued they lost in huge numbers, and the broken remnants of this formidable force were thrown into the marshy neighbourhood of the San.

Meanwhile the Russians in Galicia were diligently reducing the province. Their cavalry were over the Carpathians, and fortress after fortress was taken. But the Rawaruska-Grudek section of the Austrian army still held. Indeed, to say this is to show the abject state to which it had been reduced. Though its strength amounted to 100,000 or 150,000, it was held up by Dimitrieff with some 40,000 Russians, who, worn out by incessant marching and fighting, could hardly stand owing to fatigue. Few feats in history can compare with that of these splendid soldiers, who had marched and fought without ceasing for almost three weeks. Brussiloff came up, but still the Russians were much outnumbered. Then, with the enforced and disorderly retreat of the Austro-German left and centre, the right wing in Galicia fought with increased violence to protect the flank and rear of their main army. But Ruszky bore down from the north, and the Austro-German army broke and fell back in disorder on Przemyśl. By 14th September Rawaruska had fallen, the Russians were across the San, Grudek was in Russian hands, and the Russian line was driving in on Przemyśl. A few days later, when it was possible to sum up the results of this series of terrible battles, it was estimated that, since the fall of Lemberg the enemy had lost 250,000 killed and wounded, 100,000 prisoners, 400 guns, many colours, and vast quantities of stores. The Russian victory was complete, and the military power of Austria ceased to exist as a separate unit. Henceforth, officered and directed by Germans, it was moved and acted as a part of the German army.

The German "official wireless" entertained the world with the amusing, but also slightly pathetic fiction, that General Dankl had suspended his attack and occupied a new position, but meanwhile congratulated his army on their splendid victories at Lublin and Krasnik. The victory at Krasnik was, at any rate, the only sort of victory for which the Austrian arms are famed. The *Vossische Zeitung* some time before had confessed that its mind was almost overpowered with the conception of the German victories and decided they were "a judgment of God."

## IX. THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

"At the moment when a battle opens on which the welfare of the country depends it is necessary to remind all that this is no longer the time to look backward; every effort must be strained to attack and throw back the enemy. An army which can no longer advance ought, cost what it may, to hold the ground it has won, and to die on the spot rather than retreat. In the present circumstances no faltering can be tolerated."—[Army Order of General Joffre, issued September 6, 1914.]

DURING the first days of September the retreat of the Allies continued. It was an orderly retreat handled with the greatest skill, and it had early ceased to be a forced retreat and became a retreat for a purpose. Rearguard actions took place almost continually, and the Allies on every part of the line fought with undaunted courage

and undiminished vigour, though they were not always equally successful in their encounters with the enemy. On the 1st September, for instance, the 1st Cavalry Brigade was caught as it was retiring through thickly wooded country, south of Compiègne, by German cavalry. Taken at a disadvantage, they were driven back, and lost a horse artillery battery. But reinforcements came up, and "they not only recovered their own guns, but succeeded in capturing twelve of the enemy's." On the other hand, the 4th Guards Brigade, taken in similar country near Villers-Cotterets, suffered considerably.

September 3rd was a significant day in the great retreat. For some four days now the people of Paris had been accustomed to the visits of hostile aeroplanes which threw bombs upon the city. The daily visits did not produce half so much impression as the constant streams of wounded from the battle line and the refugees who fled in front of the retreating armies. Squadrons of armoured aeroplanes provided with machine guns were organised to chase the enemy whenever he should appear.

By the beginning of September German patrols were at Chantilly, and Paris was only a day's journey ahead. The Allies continued their retreat, and the French Government determined to leave Paris for Bordeaux. It had previously been arranged that an intermediate headquarters should be made at Tours, but it was finally decided to move to Bordeaux. Early on the morning of 3rd September the President and Cabinet left for the new headquarters, and the Deputies and Senate followed later in the day. Before leaving, the President issued a stirring proclamation. Its tone and spirit acted as a trumpet-call and justifies its perpetuation :

"FRENCHMEN,—For several weeks desperate combats have been going on between our heroic troops and the enemy. The valour of our troops has gained a marked advantage at several points. But on the north the pressure of the German forces has compelled us to retreat.

"This situation imposes on the President of the Republic and the Government a painful decision. To watch over the national safety the public authorities are in duty bound to withdraw for the moment from the City of Paris.

"Under the command of an eminent chief, a French army, full of courage and spirit, will defend the capital and its patriotic population against the invader. But, meanwhile, in the rest of the country the war must go on.

"Without peace or truce, without pause or wavering, the sacred struggle for the honour of the nation and the restoration of violated right will go on.

"None of our armies is broken. If some have suffered heavy losses, gaps have been immediately filled from the dépôts, and the levy of recruits assures us of new resources in men and energy for the morrow.

"Stand fast and fight on, such should be the watchword of the allied armies, English, Russian, Belgian, and French.

"Stand fast and fight on, while on the sea the English help us to sever the communications of our enemies with the world.

"Stand fast and fight on, while the Russians continue to advance, to deliver a decisive blow at the heart of the German Empire.

"It is the duty of the Government of the Republic to direct this determined resistance. Everywhere Frenchmen will rise in defence of their independence.



But to give to this formidable struggle all its spring and efficacy it is indispensable that the Government should preserve its liberty of action.

"At the request of the military authority the Government, then, transfers its residence for the moment to a part of the country where it can remain in constant relations with every part of the nation.

"It asks Members of Parliament not to remain far from it, so that they may form in the face of the enemy, with the Government and their colleagues, the symbol of national unity.

"The Government only leaves Paris after having ensured the defence of the city and of the entrenched camp by every means in its power.

"It knows it has no need to recommend to the admirable population of Paris calmness, resolution, and coolness. Every day it shows itself equal to the highest duties.

"FRENCHMEN,—Show yourselves worthy in these tragic circumstances. We shall obtain victory in the end. We shall secure it by unflinching resolution, endurance, and tenacity.

"A nation which refuses to perish and which in order to live recoils not from suffering or sacrifice is sure of victory."

General Gallieni, the military Governor, urged the French Government to leave Paris. He was anxious to have fewer "idle mouths" to feed, and fewer of those elements, present to a greater or less degree in every population, which are the fuel of panic. A good third of the population left. Railway stations on lines running south and south-west were thronged with people ready and anxious to leave the capital. German patrols, of Marwitz's ubiquitous cavalry corps, had cut the lines to the west, and towards the north and east the seemingly irresistible wave of German soldiery advanced. On foot, in cabs, in carts, in vehicles of all sorts, by train, by road, by river the people left. All sorts of property went with them. Some trundled barrows with a motley selection of their world's goods. Some in taxi-cabs clasped firmly in their arms their most valuable possession, in the moment of crisis—a dog or cat.

Yet Paris was a fortress of enormous strength, and General Gallieni set about making his defences as formidable as their nature would allow. The people who resolved to see things through in the capital still remained a vast population. Triply ringed in with forts, they were safe enough in spite of the fate of Liège and Namur. The spaces between the forts were well entrenched, barricaded, defended by barbed-wire obstacles; and buildings which weakened their line by affording cover were blown up. Cattle and sheep had been driven into the city. Food and ammunition were accumulated, so that the capital might resist the siege to which it looked forward. Paris, indeed, for the time became that rarest thing among great cities, a self-supporting unit. In the Louvre, in galleries and museums where *objets d'art* were collected, special measures were taken to ensure the safety of their irreplaceable treasures.

And certainly Paris seemed justified in taking a serious view of the situation. On this very day the British forces were in position south of the Marne. Their left rested on Lagny, which is but some seven and a half miles from the fort at Chelles. After having defended the Marne passages as long as seemed possible, and after having blown up the bridges, Sir John French had retreated to a new line. He

had repeatedly been urged to stand and fight, and these requests of Joffre were "actually backed by imperative messages from the French President, and from Lord Kitchener and the British Government." \* But Sir John French had written to Kitchener that he must retain "complete independence of action, and power to retire towards my base should circumstances render it necessary."† It was this that brought Lord Kitchener to France, and when he left, after conversations with Sir John French, it was with the assurance that a retirement to his base was ruled out, and that the British army would co-operate in the Battle of the Marne. The German line now described an arc across France from below Verdun to a point north of Paris. On the east of the Belfort-Verdun line the 1st and 2nd French Armies confronted the 7th and 6th German Armies. During the battle which was now gathering a determined attempt was made to force the space between the Toul and Epinal fortresses at Nancy. The attempt, if successful, would have placed a German force on the rear of the French armies, and if this had not given the Germans the decisive and rapid success they desired it would at least have given them an enormously better line of communications.

**The Battles of the Grand Couronné of Nancy.**—It is necessary to understand the main lines of the battle which developed on this part of the front, since it forms one of the chief of that group of great actions which are called the Battle of the Marne. The gap of Charmes, between the two great fortresses of Toul and Epinal, forms an eastern gateway into France, and the main German strategy included a blow through this gate into the heart of France.

After the defeat at Morhange General Castelnau had fallen back towards the south-west, and by the 21st had taken up his position in advance of Nancy. The Grand Couronné of Nancy is that range of wooded hills which forms the watershed between the river Moselle and the Seille, and the battle which developed about this naturally strong position had an ironical resemblance to that which had been fought at Morhange. On the afternoon of the 22nd the 6th German Army crossed the frontier and began to bombard the north and eastern sectors of the French positions. But the attack was delivered north of Lunéville, and the 15th Corps, which had been so badly shaken at Morhange, had to retire. Foch's 20th Corps, with its "iron division" (11th) and "steel division" (39th), the finest command in the army, held its ground in front of Dombasle the whole day against repeated attacks. But the 16th Corps gave way at Lunéville and uncovered the town, which the Germans entered on the morrow in great state.

On this day, when Mons was being fought, Dubail had achieved contact with Castelnau, his 16th Division, under General Maud'huy, linking with Castelnau's cavalry north of the forest of Charmes. Dubail's rôle was to relieve the pressure on the 2nd Army, but in the event it was Castelnau's troops who protected the left of the 1st Army and held off the Germans from the gap of Charmes. On the 24th the 6th and 7th German Armies attacked the junction of the two French armies from the south of Lunéville to Baccarat, and Dubail's troops had to fall back. Their retreat was covered by the magnificent defence of Gerbevillers, where 54 Alpini held out for the whole day against a Bavarian brigade and slipped away in the night.

The 6th Army was seen to be moving troops across the French front towards the

\* "1914," by Viscount French, p. 95.

† *Ibid.*, p. 94. It is not yet possible to speak openly of this episode; but the present account, based on a full knowledge of what occurred, is correct, though merely an outline.



south-west for a massed attack on the gap of Charmes, and Castelnau saw his chance. He ordered an attack towards the east—that is, on the flank of the marching troops and against their communications. General Fayolle, who was later to command in the Battle of the Somme, threw his 70th Division of reserve towards Arracourt and made a decided advance. But the Germans could not abandon their plan, and on the 25th they struck again south of Barcarat towards Charmes and made a significant advance. At 3 P.M. Castelnau, seeing the Germans heavily engaged on his extreme right, ordered his centre to advance. Foch's troops went forward like a stone from a sling, with the 16th Corps on its right. In front of Nancy Foch's troops and Fayolle's division met with fierce resistance. But the tide turned. Taken by surprise when they saw victory within sight, the Germans fell back. Dubail's troops recovered their lost ground and the day was won. *It was the success of this and the following two days that made Joffre's manœuvre on the Marne possible.* With the gap of Charmes closed and his rear secure he could operate in safety against Kluck's right.

Half of the German plan had been brought to nothing, and the Germans, reluctant to abandon it altogether, turned against the Grand Couronné from which Castelnau had delivered his decisive counter-attack. They saw that they must break down the resistance there or no advance could be made towards Charmes. More troops were brought up, and there began a struggle which lasted until the victory on the Marne was complete. A great concentration of artillery opened a bombardment on Pont-à-Mousson, a village lying below the peak of Mousson. After a severe struggle the Germans forced the French off the hill, and from this isolated peak they commanded St. Genevieve, a village standing on a small plateau which is connected with the main range by a low neck. Bombarded from three sides St. Genevieve was repeatedly attacked by infantry. But ever as the Germans advanced they met a deadly barrage from the 75's, the light French field gun, in the rear. The few who penetrated this zone of death encountered the rifles and machine guns of the regiment which held the summit. A final charge down the slopes ended the more successful attacks.

The Germans gradually involved the whole of the Couronné, moving southwards towards Amance. On 6th September, when the main operations of the Battle of the Marne were being carried out, the struggle for the Grand Couronné came to a climax. Apparently the incorrigible optimism of the Germans led them to believe that Castelnau's troops were so weakened that a final vigorous push would break the defence. The Kaiser came from Metz in a white cuirassier's uniform in order to see the triumph and enter Nancy. The full force of the attack fell upon Fayolle's troops, and under the terrible shock they were driven back through the Forest of Champenoux to the slopes of the plateau of Amance, almost due east of Nancy. But there the attack was held and the Germans failed finally. The battle dragged on a few days longer, but after a sudden attack towards Dombasle it died down and the French began to recover the lost ground. Castelnau's troops had been engaged continuously for almost a month in heavy fighting, and their steadfast defence was an essential pivot of the operations of the Marne.

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The disposition of the Allied armies west of the fortress line were as follows : From the left bank of the Meuse below Verdun across to the south of Revigny, was held by the 3rd French Army, now under General Sarrail; the 4th French Army,

under General de Langle to the south of Vitry, guarded the plain of Châlons; the 9th French Army under General Foch, a new army but recently moved into position, held a line from Mailly to Sézanne; the 5th French Army, now commanded by General Franchet d'Esperey, with Conneau's Cavalry Corps on its left, held a line from Sézanne to the plateaux north of Provins; the five divisions and five cavalry brigades of the British army (for the 3rd Army Corps consisted of only one division, the 4th, and the 19th Brigade) rested between Lagny and Coulommiers; and the 6th French Army, commanded by General Maunoury, covered Paris north of the Marne.

The Allied line sagged a little towards the centre and east. The attack towards Nancy was to be accompanied by a violent offensive between Châlons and Verdun by the Crown Prince's army. The aim of the German Staff was to drive the French armies in a south-easterly direction, away from Paris towards the Swiss frontier; and Hausen was to assist the 2nd or 3rd Armies at need, while Kluck, acting under Bülow's order, was to cover the right flank.

In the news officially circulated by Germany on 4th September, the main German advance continued normally towards the Marne. The armies composing the German line were the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th, under Kluck, Bülow, Hausen, the Duke of Wurtemberg, and the Crown Prince.

But on the previous day, the same day that the French Government left Paris, General von Kluck abandoned his advance west of Paris, changing the line of his march and beginning to move directly across the front of the British line. It was found by air reconnaissances that the main columns of Kluck's army were marching south-east instead of south. His new line of advance had the effect of concentrating the German forces which had been weakened by their losses and by the withdrawal of two army corps for service on the Eastern front against Russia. Two corps had been left to hold the line of the Ourcq against the 6th French Army, and thus defend the flank and rear of Kluck's main advance. On 6th September the Germans were across the Grand Morin and south of Lagny, and patrols had even reached Provins and Nogent on the Seine.

In the meantime, however, General Joffre had come to the conclusion that the Germans had at last given him a favourable opening for a counter-offensive. "On Saturday, 5th September," says Sir John French, "I met the French Commander-in-Chief at his request, and he informed me of his intention to take the offensive forthwith, as he considered conditions were very favourable to success." He requested the British commander to change his front so as to connect the 6th French Army on the west with the 5th French Army on the east. He was to turn towards the east, resting his left on the Marne, on which lay the right of the 6th French Army. The latter, wheeling on the Marne, was to march towards the Ourcq and attack the flank of the 1st German Army. The British were to advance also and join the general offensive.

English and French people at this point had touched the depths of depression. The defeat before Nancy seemed nothing. The rally at Guise was even less. The capture of Lemberg had scarcely wiped out the dismal impressions of Tannenberg, and, in any case, it was so far away from the place where the Germans seemed to be repeating the course of the Franco-Prussian War.

At sunrise on Sunday, 6th September, the combined offensive began along the whole Allied line to a point below and west of Verdun. In the west, where conditions were most favourable, since General von Kluck's new move challenged the





The Opening of the Battle of the Marne.

6th French, the British and half of the 5th French Armies, the changed disposition of forces was most marked. The 6th French Army marched eastward, the British troops towards the north-east, and the 5th French Army in a northerly direction. It was about noon on this day when the 6th French Army's advance and the changed line of the British became apparent, and General von Kluck, realising the powerful threat that was being made against his flank, began the great readjustment which opened the Battle of the Marne.

"This," says the Press Bureau, speaking of the British, "was the first time that these troops had turned back since their attack on Mons a fortnight before, and from reports received the order to retreat when so close to Paris was a bitter disappointment. From letters found on the dead there is no doubt there was a general impression among the enemy's troops that they were about to enter Paris." But the fortress of Paris, probably the strongest in the world, could not be reduced without much delay. Maubeuge\* was not yet reduced; Longwy had held out a week. Heavy artillery would have to be brought up, and in the face of a strong garrison the placing of heavy siege artillery would not be the easy achievement it had proved in the case of Namur. Meantime the French forces would be gathering strength. Already a new army had but recently strengthened the French line.

The German Staff were in a serious difficulty. Given time and the opportunity to employ all their troops the difficulty would have been easily surmounted. But neither condition was present. The attacking line had been weakened already by the dispatch of reinforcements to the East—by the necessity for leaving two corps in Belgium and one at Maubeuge—and the Russian forces were only at present weak as compared with the numbers they would be able to put in the field in the near future. The Austrians had been crushingly beaten at Lemberg on 2nd September; and three days later they had been defeated again at Tomaszov. Moreover, it was clear that the capture of Paris, even if it could be achieved rapidly, would not be decisive, and from the resistance at Nancy the Germans deduced a much weaker concentration of the French west of Verdun. Moltke had allowed forty days to secure a decision in the West. The time was almost up.

With the crumbling up of the Austrian resistance, and the growth of the Russian power in the rear, the German Staff saw that they must attempt to force a decision. Indeed no sound strategist could come to any other conclusion. An army is formed to beat armies, just as a fortress is built to delay them. So long as there is a formidable unbeaten army in the field no nation is beaten and no aggressor is victorious. Kluck's march across the British front was a perilous adventure; but something had to be done since so far the Germans in their unique and splendid advance had achieved nothing at all, while the Allied armies remained in the field completely organised with their strength and *moral* unbroken. Outflanking was no longer possible unless they struck east of Paris. The Allies must therefore be cut off from Paris, while any attempt near the fortresses guarding the flank would involve the risk of drawing their fire and garrisons into the struggle.

There is no necessity to think that the astute General von Kluck in marching across the British front meant to ignore the troops which had inflicted such heavy loss on his command. And, indeed, to think so is to ignore the fact that the German commander allotted two of Marwitz's cavalry divisions to the task of watching the country in the immediate front of the line of the British force. It is true that this

\* It fell the next day, 7th September, and its garrison of 30,000 men surrendered.



force was completely inadequate to hold troops such as the British had shown themselves. But, on the other hand, it must not be forgotten that to hold the line of the Ourcq against General Maunoury with the 7th Army Corps, Sordet's corps of cavalry, and four reserve divisions, he left only the 2nd Corps and the 4th Reserve. The forces which he had to spare were relatively little stronger in the case of his long flank exposed to the French than in the case of the shorter length exposed to the British.

It was, all things considered, the most suitable division of his forces if so great a risk must be taken, and the justification of such a risk is the concomitant advantage. In attacking the left and left centre of the 5th French Army, General von Kluck allowed a strong concentration to be made towards the eastern end of the line from Paris to Verdun. Under an onset of three German armies the French line was in great danger at Vitry, a point at which it was apparently hoped to break through. In spite of every effort no impression could be made by the French troops at Vitry or to the immediate west until the German right was thrown back upon the Aisne, and the position at Vitry, exposed to attack from the west as well as from the south, became too dangerous for the Germans to hold.

On Sunday, 6th September, the Allied offensive began. The following day the 6th French Army found its advance upon the Ourcq strongly opposed. The river makes a strong defensive barrier with its deep and precipitous banks, and the Germans held the small townships and villages on the high west bank. Fierce struggles took place at Acy, Etavigny, Betz. The 5th French Army advanced with great rapidity, hurling the Germans across the Petit Morin at the point of the bayonet. The British troops made headway against the cavalry rearguard, and the British cavalry caused the enemy great loss with its vigorous charges. General de Lisle's Brigade, which had already distinguished itself, was particularly active on this day.

The rest of the Allied line found the forces opposed to it too strong for an advance of so pronounced a character. At some points it succeeded in advancing slightly, at others it was pressed back. But the 3rd French Army had been pushed back upon the 2nd, and the Crown Prince's soldiers were able to bombard Fort Troyon from its western and weaker side. Certain reinforcements were set free by the fall of Maubeuge, which occurred on this day. Two forts had fallen the day before, and the town was on fire from the bombardment when the fortress surrendered.

The following day the struggle continued. The British were engaged in hotly contested rearguard actions on the Petit Morin River. The 1st and 2nd Army Corps made headway only against heavy opposition. The Germans had taken up a good position on the north bank of the river at La Tretoire and were well supplied with guns. The position might have resisted even longer than it did but for the cavalry and the first division which had crossed the river higher up. Several machine guns and many prisoners were captured in this action, and more prisoners and machine guns were taken later in the day in a counter-attack by the Germans. The 2nd and 3rd Army Corps both drove back the enemy slightly at all points.

On 9th September, the 1st and 2nd Corps forced the passage of the Marne and "advanced some miles to the north of it." But the 3rd Corps was not able to cross until nightfall. The bridge of La Ferté had been destroyed, and the Germans held the town on the northern bank in strength. Machine guns covered the crossing, and the defence was obstinately continued. Some compensation for this hotly contested action was afforded by the large capture, by another part of the British force, of prisoners and a battery of eight machine guns. On the Ourcq, the

6th French Army found its advance still held up by fresh German reinforcements. For two whole days a terrible struggle had been going on from Acy to Betz, and on this day the situation seemed critical. Strengthened as it had been by drafts from the army under Gallieni for the defence of Paris, Maunoury's army wavered before the constantly increasing force opposed to it. Maunoury ordered the line to be held at all costs. At this point Kluck had cleverly flung his troops round the northern flank of the 6th Army, towards Baron and Nanteuil, and Maunoury's position was critical. More of the Paris defence force were brought up in motor cars and motor vehicles of all sorts, and the tension of the German line at last became unsupportable. The British were now beginning to exercise effective pressure on the cavalry screen in front of them. The 5th Army had forced back Bülow's right, and Foch was still resisting though in a bad position.

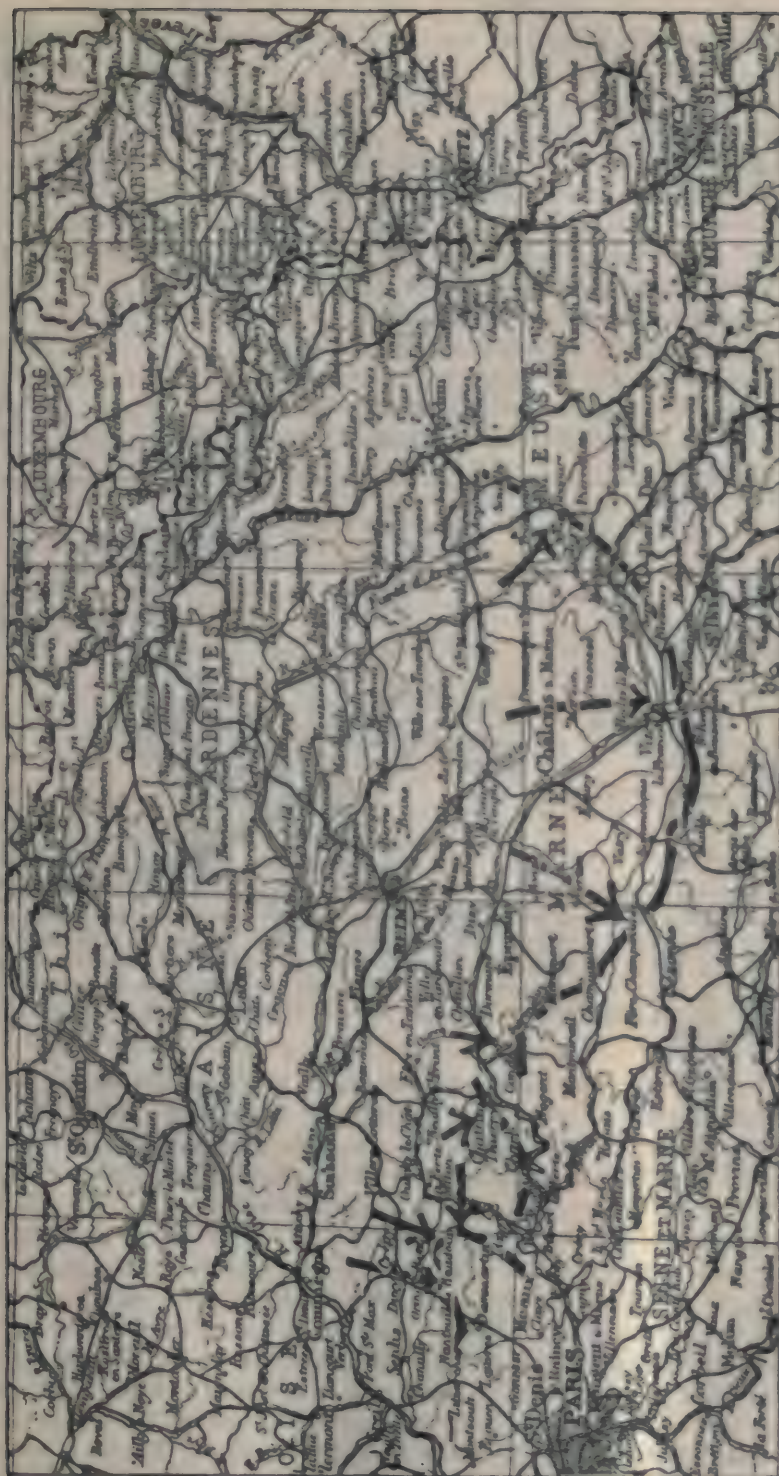
But a closer view of the situation does not encourage any simple conclusion as to the reason of the Allied victory. Maunoury's flank attack was not the decisive factor, since his army was in a critical position on the night of the 9th. It was fighting on two fronts and barely holding off the force which threatened to envelop it. The most plausible view is that the counter-stroke of Foch turned the scales; that the flank attack had caused a dislocation in the German line, and the 9th French Army struck through the gap. But the critical gap was that between Bülow and Kluck, caused by the rout of the former's right flank, and this was the immediate cause of the order to retire.

**Fère-Champenoise.**—The mystery is not solved by a study of the times when orders were issued, since the decision to order a retreat was probably founded upon a survey of numerous factors. Yet it is certain that if Foch did not win the Battle of the Marne he prevented its failure where all the odds were against him. How did this come to pass?

General Foch was recalled from Lorraine to assume command of a new army. To speak of this as though it were formed from fresh troops or reserves is quite inaccurate. Dubois' 10th Army Corps, Eydoux's 11th Corps and 9th Cavalry Division had been engaged with the 4th Army in the Ardennes, and the 52nd and 60th Divisions came from the same sector of the front. The 42nd Division came from the 3rd Army and was put under Ruffey's Chief of Staff, Grossetti. The army represented a skilful regrouping, with some new elements added. Foch's rôle was to cover the right of the 5th Army, prevent the issue from the marshes of St. Gond, and his success was due to that skilful generalship and indomitable resolution which later decided the war.

The marshes of St. Gond are merely a thin ribbon, three miles deep and ten miles long, the main defence of which was the square castle of Mondemont on the west. The Germans, in dealing with the 9th Army, lost several days in an insane attempt to capture this position, whereas the stage was arranged for another Tannenberg. They should have withdrawn their centre and attacked on the flanks; and Foch's dispositions seemed almost to invite this manœuvre. His troops lay in a salient within the lines of Bülow and Hausen. Bülow's 10th Corps lay on his left towards Mondemont, and as he was also established at Esternay, to the south, he had before him a considerable open flank to attack. The Guards were in the centre, and Hausen's other two corps, 11th and 19th, were on Foch's right, the latter held up throughout almost the entire battle by a part of a cavalry division. The gap in Foch's right corresponded oddly enough to a weakness in the German line.





The Position on the Afternoon of 9th September.

Early in the morning of the 6th the battle began with a great attack upon Mondemont, which was assailed by picked Prussian troops. The 42nd Division had to retire slightly, but despite a fierce onslaught throughout the day the position was substantially the same in the evening. On the right the towns which marked the front were all burning from the intense fire; but the line was not weakened materially. In the centre, however, the Germans had gained a footing on the southern edge of the marshes, at Baunes. On the following day Mondemont was still the centre of the struggle, and it was being attacked from both flanks. The 42nd Division suffered heavily from the terrible rain of German shells, but with the help of the Moroccan Division, under General Humbert, relieved the pressure by means of vigorous counter-attacks. Franchet d'Esperey also assisted these sorely tried divisions with his 10th Corps. The struggle had also been severe in the centre, and during the night a sudden assault pushed back the right wing two and a half miles. The Germans had now determined to adopt the plan they should have followed



Details of the Decisive Movement of Foch's Army. The daring manœuvre which won the Battle of Fère-Champenoise was the removal of Grossetti's division from the battered left behind the front and the flinging of this little force into the gap between Bülow's and Hausen's corps. The numbers 1, 2, 3, show the stages in Foch's advance.

at first. The Fère-Champenoise road on the right was now opened and the Guard Reserve, under Gallwitz's direction, entered the town with their band playing. Foch's 11th Corps was in disorder, and meanwhile Bülow was attacking the left flank. But the 5th French Army was now beginning to cause Bülow considerable anxiety. That night it thrust him out of Montmirail with such precipitation that his troops left behind maps, documents, and numerous letters for the post, and farther west his line was being pushed back until its contact with Kluck became precarious.

The decisive hour had now come. During the night there were heavy showers, but this did not prevent Bülow delivering a sudden attack on the castle of Mondemont, which fell at daybreak and remained in German hands till evening, despite an heroic attempt by the Vendéen troops to recapture it. Foch's right was still falling back, and now rested upon the Mailly road at Corroy. The Germans penetrated later to Connantre and the situation became critical. It was after a consultation with Franchet d'Esperey that Foch determined upon a bold manœuvre. He



had no reserves. His centre and right seemed to be almost at the last extremity. He, therefore, ordered the 42nd Division to move across from the left flank behind the Moroccan Division and fall upon the left centre of the Germans about Connantre. When the order was given he had no knowledge of any gap in the German line, and indeed the evidence shows that Hausen had only thinned it in his turning movement. The 1st and 10th Corps of the 5th Army were to disengage Foch's left, now weakened by the withdrawal of the 42nd Division.

This unit came into action at 6 P.M. Earlier in the afternoon a German aeroplane had flown across the French lines and observed the division in motion. It returned to the German lines and gave information of impending attack. The 42nd Division had been fighting for four days without respite. It had suffered heavy loss. But with its commander, the huge Corsican Grossetti, riding at its head, it flung itself toward the south-east upon the Germans and forced them back. Part of the division then turned towards the north-east through a breach in the left centre of Hausen's line, and pushed on to the north of the marshes. The battle was won. It was found later that Bülow had received orders to retire about 5 P.M., and Hausen also began to look to his positions at the same time. It is now certain that this was not due to the threat of Grossetti's division, but rather to Bülow's position, and to the cumulative effect of these and other factors.

The German commanders had realised the hopelessness of maintaining their position, for when, at daybreak on the 10th, the advance was pushed up to the line of the Ourcq, the British troops secured 13 guns, 7 machine guns, about 2,000 prisoners, and large quantities of transport. The advance of the 6th and 5th French Armies met with little opposition. The 1st and 2nd German Armies were now in full retreat.

Checked before Nancy, threatened on the Ourcq, their centre becoming dislocated by the pressure of the 5th French Army and the British, with the successful resistance at Fère-Champenoise and imminence of what might be a decisive counter-attack, the Germans saw that the battle was lost. Their men were weary. Many were hungry and almost starving. The supply of ammunition was not working perfectly. Their losses were having a profound cumulative effect. So for the time they fell back in good order to rest and re-form.

As the Allies moved forward they came across the traces of German occupation in towns and villages. Pillage was so frequent as scarcely to attract attention; but the destruction of pictures in the larger houses and châteaux could only be described as wanton. In the wake of the advancing troops moved the engineers whose business it was to reconstruct railways and bridges. Wholesale destruction had been caused, almost as much by the Allies to prevent the German advance as by the enemy to stem the drive of the French.

In the early morning of the 11th the 3rd British Army Corps crossed the Ourcq practically unopposed, the cavalry reaching the Aisne River. The advance now met with the most vigorous opposition, a fact which convinced Sir John French that for the moment at least the enemy had arrested his retreat.

During these last three days the French had been swaying backwards and forwards under the violence of the German attack towards the east. On the 11th, however, the German forces, by the retreat of the armies on the western section of the field, found themselves in a position of so great danger that they were forced to retire. It was on this day, therefore, that the retreat became general over the whole

battle-front. When Vitry was taken there was found, in the late headquarters of the 8th Army Corps, an order signed by its commanding officer, General Tulff von Tschepe und Weidenbach, which shows how decisive this victory of the Marne had been. It was issued at the end of the first day of the Allied attack and runs as follows :

"VITRY-LE-FRANÇOIS, *Sept. 7, 10.30 P.M.*

"The end of our long and arduous marches has been attained. The chief French armies have been compelled to give battle after having been continually thrown back. The great decision is undoubtedly at hand. To-morrow, then, the full force of the German army, as well as all that of our army corps, will be engaged all along the line from Paris to Verdun to save the welfare and honour of Germany. I expect every officer and soldier, in spite of the hard and heroic combats of the last few days, to do his duty wholeheartedly and to his last breath. Everything depends upon the fortune of to-morrow."

On the day that Vitry fell, Lunéville was retaken by the French, and the Germans were forced well back in that direction. Everywhere they were in retreat, and at points this was so precipitate as to be very near a rout. The 3rd French Army captured the whole artillery of an army corps. Batteries, howitzers, and ammunition wagons were found abandoned over the battle-front. The numerous prisoners gave the impression of overwork, starvation, and depression.

With the retreat everywhere enforced, Fort Troyon, which had been on the point of falling, was relieved. If it had been taken and the fortress line pierced this would have been as useful a success as the forcing of the gap between Toul and Epinal. But St. Mihiel fell, though the issue from it was blocked. The Germans held this strange salient for over four years.

No one realised at the time the decisive nature of this defeat. Civilian observers, seeing the Germans still in the heart of France, tended to regard the victory as abortive despite their relief. It is true that the French spoke of it as the "decisive shock"; but this was more from the realisation of what defeat would have meant, and Moltke informed Hausen that the troops were to rest "about eight days."

The Battle of the Marne, by decisively arresting the offensive of the Germans and pinning them down to a war of positions, contained the germs of full defeat. With its corollary, the Battle of Flanders, it ensured time for the great resources of the British Empire to be flung into the scale. It meant that a siege war must begin, and this must in the end reduce Germany.

Joffre's strategy had triumphantly justified itself and he had proved himself a great general. But neither he nor Moltke, his opponent, at first realised that the victory ended one phase and opened another. After the Battle of the Aisne each cautiously felt round the other's flank in order to restore the warfare of movements until, at the end of the Battle of Flanders, it was realised that such warfare had passed for some time.

The Battle of the Aisne began with the attack on the positions on which the Germans had halted, a battle which in the nature of its operations and its duration more resembled a prolonged siege. The German Staff, which had made so marvellous an advance through France towards Paris, had organised a masterly retreat on positions almost as formidable as any in the world. But the tide had turned un-



questionably. For weeks the Germans were to be held up in France until the time came to take up those positions about which the war ebbed and flowed until Foch's decisive offensive forced the Germans to fall back precipitately and ask for terms.

## X. THE ALLIES' DEBT TO BELGIUM.

"Belgium had no interest of her own to serve, save and except the one supreme and over-riding interest of every State, great or little, which is worthy of the name—the preservation of her integrity and of her national life. . . . The Belgians have won for themselves the immortal glory which belongs to a people who prefer freedom to ease, to security, even to life itself. We are proud of their alliance and their friendship. . . . We are with them heart and soul, because by their side and in their company we are defending at the same time two great causes—the independence of small States and the sanctity of international covenants; and we assure them—as I ask the House in this address to do—we assure them to-day, in the name of this United Kingdom and of the whole Empire, that they may count to the end on our wholehearted and unflinching support."—[Mr. Asquith, in the House of Commons, August 27, 1914.]

By her heroic resistance at Liège and elsewhere Belgium rendered almost incalculable services to the Allies. In the light of that extraordinary German march upon Paris, with its threat of annihilation to the Franco-British left for days on the verge of accomplishment, what would have been the fate of France if the German force had fallen upon it a week before? If the French armies, even with the help of 85,000 British soldiers who from the principle of their selection and by their long training were the most formidable in the world, could not hold up that group of mighty armies after nearly three weeks of full preparation, what would, what could they have done if the Germans had fallen upon them on the twelfth or thirteenth day of mobilisation? There is no need to labour this point. If Belgium did not save France, and with France the Allies, from defeat, she at least saved that country untold humiliation and misery.

But she was yet to render the Allies still further services. When the Germans marched through Brussels on 20th August, the Belgian army lay behind the forts of Antwerp. Its position made it so serious a menace that it is strange the Germans did not make some considerable effort to put it out of action. Handled with great skill and courage for nearly two months, it threatened the German communications and occupation, and its entry into the field at a critical moment in the Battle of the Marne undoubtedly assisted the victory of the Allies.

Even this did not exhaust the services of Belgium to the Allied cause and to the world. It was her tragic fate to unmask completely the strange atavistic growth which has been called Prussian militarism. Dinant, Malines, Termonde, and Louvain most of all, are the chief heads of Belgium's crushing indictment of a spirit which has its parallels only in the records of barbaric nations. All the savageries of the German army will never be known. Numerous as these had been already, they required revelation. The tragedies of a hundred nameless places became known only by degrees. But it was not long before the German troops perpetrated a crime which could not be hidden, which amazed the whole world. It was the burning of Louvain, a crime which ministered neither to individual nor corporate desire for protection, which convinced the world that Germany's treatment of

Belgium was not the idiosyncrasy of individuals, nor a sudden and unconsidered act of passion, but a deliberate policy of terrorism.

The very day after the theatrical entry into Brussels, while the French were, with splendid courage, fighting against vastly superior numbers at Charleroi and the heavy guns were tolling the passing of Namur, began the attack on Dinant, an action which seems to recall nothing so much as the anarchist outbreaks in the East End of London. At nightfall, when many of the inhabitants were already asleep, an armoured motor car ran into the town and began firing at random at the houses. People who appeared at their doors were shot. The next day German troops arrived and proceeded to make an end of the town. Women and children were driven into a monastery, there to lie for several days hungry and fearful. The men were shot, many being herded together and dispatched with machine guns. Then the houses were visited and set on fire. Any one visiting the town a few days later would have found but a small proportion of its houses standing and its people fled. No excuse was found or even pleaded for this crime.

Two days later the Belgian army, undismayed, made a sortie from Antwerp. In the meantime Namur had fallen and the Allies were falling back, but the Germans were driven out of Malines and fell back upon Louvain. Here, about six o'clock in the evening of 25th August, shots were heard near the station, alarm signals sounded, and the German soldiers ran into the streets. All that night shots were heard, and those who left their houses next morning saw the town was on fire. The bodies of the slain were even burning in the streets. It is clear and even admitted that the town was deliberately fired. House after house was visited and the firing was done scientifically. Inflammable bombs were exploded after the walls had been sprayed with petroleum, or after cakes of a compressed benzine compound had been scattered about.

For a day and a half the burning continued, and when it died down this beautiful old university town, the Oxford of Belgium, around which cling the memories of Lipsius, the philologist; Erasmus, the humanist; Mercator, the geographer; van Helmont, the chemist; and Vesalius, the anatomist, which in its day stood next to Paris as the most famous university in Europe, lay literally in ruins. The town hall alone seems to have been deliberately spared; but the university with its glorious library, one of the most famous in the world, was destroyed. The beautiful rood-screen of St. Pierre perished, and wherever one turned were tumbled walls, bricks, and mortar.

In spite of the fact that the whole world was horrified at such a crime, the Germans continued their policy. Malines, the archiepiscopal city, with its beautiful cathedral of St. Rombaut and its famous chimes, an open, undefended city, was bombarded two days after the burning of Louvain. The town hall suffered severely, and the cathedral roof and walls were pierced and the glass was destroyed. Twice again it was bombarded, on 2nd September, the chimes being smashed to bits and part of the proud cathedral tower. Nearly the whole of the inhabitants had left the city after the first bombardment, but it was subjected to a rain of shrapnel. Once again, on Sunday morning, 27th September, when its handful of inhabitants were in the streets at church time, the bombardment was reopened and many people were killed.

Meanwhile, Termonde, a town of some 10,000 inhabitants, which possessed a beautiful town hall, had come under the iron hand. It was bombarded and taken



on 4th September, although the inhabitants attempted to keep the Germans out by flooding the neighbourhood. A fine of £40,000 was levied, but as it was not paid the bombardment was reopened, and hardly a house or a building escaped. A further bombardment followed before a visitor to the town on 26th September found it in ruins and deserted by all but a blind woman and her daughter. It had been fired systematically, and there was convincing evidence of looting.

These were not the only evidences of German savagery. Many towns and villages had been destroyed. Aerschot had been destroyed long before, owing, the Germans said, to the crime of the son of the burgomaster, who was supposed to have shot the military commander. Even where the towns were not wholly destroyed by bombardment and fire, drunken orgies, pillage, and wanton destruction had reduced them almost to ruins. Homeless, destitute, hungry people were to be found straying about the country. Survivors from Dinant, Malines, Louvain, made their way after further sufferings to Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, and Ostend. Nor were bombardment and fire the only terrorism. As early as the beginning of September an airship had appeared over Antwerp, and at the end of the month Antwerp, Ostend, and many towns and villages had been thus visited. Red cross hospitals, convents, orphanages, and public buildings had been damaged by the air bombs.

The calculated scheme of terrorism was justified to the German mind by the principle, aptly expressed by the German Chancellor—"one of the most eminent men in the world," a German professor called him—that necessity is a solvent of all moral obligations. It is a perilous principle, and, applied as the Germans applied it, it would drive the world back upon that other fundamental principle, so frankly and ingenuously confessed by the German militarists, that might is the only right, and would ultimately break the bonds which civilisation has patiently forged to constrain the primitive and insurgent claims of the savage. For apply it socially, and how long would the poor remain poor; and, become rich, how long would their desires be slaked by their new opportunities.

The Germans conceived it necessary to march through Belgium and attack France first. After four months of the war there were signs that they had found it more necessary to deal Russia a crushing blow, and then to march against France. They had challenged time with certain known resources. These would not permit her to subjugate Belgium completely, or to occupy it in the full military sense. Hence they must drive through the Hague Conventions and all moral obligations. "These atrocities," said the Press Bureau, in publishing the first report of the Belgian judicial commission, "appear to be committed . . . with the deliberate intention of terrorising the people, and so making it unnecessary to leave troops in occupation of small places, or to protect lines of communication."

That was the point. With her resources and challenge to time Germany could not formally occupy the country, and hence a deliberate policy of terrorism.\* Hence she violated the provisions of the Hague Convention, 1907, which expressly point out that there is a limit to the means to be used against the enemy (art. 22), that bombardment of undefended towns and villages is forbidden (art. 25), that collec-

\* "No one will believe that Brussels, where we are to-day as in our own home, would have allowed us to do as we liked if the inhabitants had not trembled before our vengeance, and if they did not continue to tremble."—Captain Blône, adjutant of the Governor-General of Belgium, in the *Kölnische Zeitung* of February 10, 1915. In the same article he says, "It was as a note of warning—Louvain and Dinant were burned."

tive penalties of any sort cannot be imposed for the acts of individuals (art. 50), that in sieges and bombardments churches, hospitals, and buildings devoted to art or science must be immune as far as possible (art. 27), and that, in territories not under occupation, those who take up arms spontaneously against an invader must be looked on as belligerents if they carry arms openly, and do not violate the laws of war (art. 2). All these provisions apply to non-neutral countries. In the case of a neutral country it is expressly stipulated that even forcible resistance to the violation of its neutrality by a nation is not to be regarded as a hostile act (art. 10).

The German Staff attempted to justify the "chastisement" of Louvain by the plea that a German Landwehr battalion left in the town had been attacked by the civil population. The Belgian Minister in London published through the Press Bureau the following telegram from the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs :—

"On Tuesday evening a German corps, after receiving a check, withdrew in disorder into the town of Louvain. A German guard at the entrance to the town mistook the nature of this incursion and fired on their routed fellow-countrymen, mistaking them for Belgians. . . ." In spite of all denials from the authorities, the Germans, in order to cover up their mistake, pretended it was the inhabitants who had fired on them, and seized upon the pretext for making an example.

The Landwehr reserve is composed of men who have served some four or five years in the first reserve, and of men, therefore, who have spent that number of years in civil life, and had time to lose their familiarity with the colours. It is quite possible that a guard, with his nerves a little on edge through living in the heart of a hostile country, and not wholly familiar with the distinguishing marks of the German and Belgian uniforms, should have mistaken his own countrymen falling back for the enemy. It is known that an army corps was driven out of Malines by the Belgians, and compelled to fall back upon Louvain. But there is some evidence that several shots came from the Belgian inhabitants of Louvain. There could not have been many, for the arms had been collected by the town administration. Some few may have been retained, and the sight of their enemy retiring apparently beaten may have put prudence to flight. But grant it all, and still the Germans, in seizing upon the pretext to destroy a beautiful and famous university town, are convicted of most flagrant breaches of the Hague Convention. The protest, signed by sixteen eminent Irishmen, "members of governing bodies of universities and colleges, academies and learned societies, libraries and museums," speaks of the destruction of Louvain "as not only a violence against defenceless non-combatants unparalleled in European history since the Thirty Years' War, but as an injury to learning, science, and education, to history and art, to religion and citizenship, which is wholly without precedent, and which no military exigencies or expediences can extenuate, much less justify. We regard this act as of the gravest injury to the whole fabric and life of European and general civilisation, since it destroys the guarantees hitherto respected by combatants." An injury to the fabric and life of European culture! And it was to impose her pre-eminent Kultur that Germany felt herself justified in claiming world power.

Germany speedily recognised that she had ruined her cause in the eyes of the most powerful neutral nation, the United States of America, and towards the end of September Major von Manteuffel, who was the officer in command, was recalled. His fault was that he had chosen the wrong instance to make an example of, though his action was officially justified. But the laying bare to the world that Germany



would readily break even the most crucial and sacred compacts with her fellow-men so soon as her expedience dictated it was a priceless gain to the Allies, since it showed that no peace with Germany could ever be considered lasting until that spirit was finally and fully exorcised.

Certainly Germany's position in Belgium must have been very galling. Even after the occupation of Brussels the Belgians held the country west of a line through Antwerp, along the Scheldt to Ghent and along the Lys. Two German divisions which had occupied Malines were, as we have seen, hurled out of the town on 24th August. A patrol venturing towards Ostend was beaten off two days later, and British marines occupied the town on 27th August. The German communications were very insecure, and the indomitable M. Max made the position of the German Governor of Belgium, Field-Marshal Baron von der Goltz, anything but easy. The Germans had imposed war levies on the chief towns of Belgium, and the Governor had much difficulty in collecting that of Brussels, which was assessed at £8,000,000. In the end, M. Max, who was determined to keep up the instalments of the levy only so long as the Germans kept their side of the compact entered into at the time of the occupation, refused one instalment and was taken away prisoner to Germany.

In September the nerves of the German troops in Belgium received more and stronger shocks. On the 4th, the Germans marched towards Antwerp from Brussels, but were driven back south-west of Malines by the opening of the dykes. On 6th September, General von Boehn, who was engaged in the decisive battles in the last stages of the war, sent some 5,000 troops to occupy Ghent. They approached the town from the south-east, and at Melle came upon Belgian troops strongly entrenched. They were beaten off with heavy loss, the Belgians suffering but few casualties themselves. The German commander did not wish to waste much time over the affair, but he, apparently, felt he must exact punishment.

He accordingly sent a summons to the burgomaster to surrender under threat of bombardment. The Belgians had already seen sufficient of the German troops to know the threat was no empty one, and hence the burgomaster went to General von Boehn to arrange terms. He succeeded in driving a fair bargain. There should be no bombardment, and German troops should not enter the town, on condition that the civic guard were disarmed, the Belgian troops sent from the town, and supplies furnished. The arrangement about the supplies had the most momentous consequences. Some were to be delivered near Oudenarde two days later.

This was clear evidence that reinforcements were on their way to France. It was discovered that some 80,000 men were marching to the assistance of the German right, which was then struggling with Maunoury's army about the Ourcq. The Belgians at once determined to make a sortie from Antwerp. They marched from Termonde and Lierre. Aerschot was retaken, and Alost and Malines reoccupied. From Malines the Belgians threatened Brussels and Louvain. Appeals for help were at once issued by the German military commanders. The lines of communication, and even the German occupation, seemed threatened.

The reinforcements, so badly needed in these days of the Battle of the Marne, had to hurry back from the south, and after some brief but heavy fighting the Belgians retired upon Antwerp. They had suffered heavy losses, but the Germans had fared worse; and the Battle of the Marne had been definitely decided in the Allies' favour when, on 13th September, the Belgians were once again behind the

Antwerp forts. This significant episode seems to have convinced the German Staff that Antwerp must be reduced. It never seems to have occurred to them to isolate it. Even to the last day of the siege, communications were open between Antwerp and Ostend. In that way British reinforcements came, and more could have come; and in that way all real fruit of the taking of Antwerp—the capture of the Belgian army—was lost.

Before the siege was actually determined upon, renewed overtures were made to King Albert by the Germans; but they were indignantly disdained. The huge siege guns which had been used at Maubeuge were on their way north. On 21st September two of them, drawn each in four parts with three traction engines to each part, passed Waterloo. These 17-inch guns required special mechanics to operate them. But in point of fact they do not seem to have been as effective anywhere as the 11-inch howitzers which were not so enthusiastically acclaimed by the German people.

On the night of Thursday, 24th September, an airship dropped bombs upon Antwerp, and with that the concerted movement against the great fortress began.

## XI. THE BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

“The brunt of the resistance has naturally fallen upon the infantry. In spite of the fact that they have been drenched to the skin for some days, and their trenches have been deep in mud and water, and in spite of the almost continuous bombardment to which they have been subjected, they have on every occasion been ready for the enemy’s infantry when the latter have attempted to assault, and they have beaten them back with great loss.”—[Sir John French’s dispatch.]

THE battle, or rather campaign, which began on the line of the Aisne on 12th September will always have its own place in history. Take the general line of the opposing armies at the opening of the campaign. With the retreat from the Marne and its tributaries the western German detachments had evacuated Amiens and fallen back eastwards towards Chaulnes and Roye. From this point the armies were in contact on a line which ran south and slightly east to the Aigle Forest, in the angle between the Oise and Aisne. Thence it followed the Aisne until towards Craonne it bent sharply south to a point a little north of Epernay, followed the line of the Marne to the north to Vitry, thence between Revigny and Triacourt to the Meuse. Compare this line with that occupied on 29th September, not three weeks later. On this day the line from between Albert and Combles to the Aigle Forest was practically the same, though now fixed and stronger than at the opening of the battle. From the Aigle Forest it still followed the Aisne, but slightly to the north, to towards Craonne; thence it skirted the high road from Berry-au-Bac to Reims; from Reims to Varennes it followed the old Roman road to Reims and north of Souain to a point north of Varennes; thence north and east of Verdun to the Meuse at St. Mihiel, and east to Pont-à-Mousson. Two months later there were but slight modifications in this line.

None but the largest scale maps would show any notable difference in the general line between 29th September and 16th October, and between this day and two months later. And between 12th and 29th September only large maps would show how



the line had changed between the district of Albert and that of Craonne. But from Reims to the Forest of the Argonne the line between 12th and 29th September had changed to an extent which would appear remarkable on almost any map. On the earlier date it lay about Revigny; at the end of the month and for some time afterwards it passed north of Varennes. Now Revigny is almost due south of Varennes and nearly thirty miles distant; and from this it is clear that while the Allied left was struggling to gain yards and make good such an advance, the centre had pushed back the enemy, on a front of about forty-five miles, over a distance on the extreme east of nearly thirty miles.

This fact gives a very good measure of the force with which the Allied western arm had been operating against the German army advancing on Paris; and it further indicates the violence of the attempt of the German armies to break the Allied line about the right centre. Between 9th and 12th September the German right and centre had been thrown back between forty and fifty miles. But in the same period little impression had been made upon the group of armies—Hausen's, Wurtemberg's, and the Crown Prince's—operating from Sézanne to Vitry and beyond to where, between the Forest of the Argonne and the Meuse, the Imperial Crown Prince was employed in the congenial task of attempting to batter an opening in the fortified wall from Verdun to Toul. On the 9th, as we have seen, the western flank of the group of armies had been forced to give way, and Hausen's troops were driven through the Marshes of St. Gond. But the centre and eastern wing held, and did not begin to give way until two days later. On 13th September they were still holding the south of the Argonne.

Fighting stubbornly, they contested every step. The Crown Prince's army was reluctant to relinquish the bombardment of Fort Troyon with the famous 11-inch guns. On the 13th the German east lay north of the Forest of Belnoue. The following day the line was north of the camp of Châlons to Vienne-la-Ville, and the Crown Prince's army at night lay between Varennes on the Aire and Consenvoye, just over the Meuse. The headquarters at St. Menehould had been removed north, and was settled at Montfaucon. On the 16th the Crown Prince's army had entrenched at Montfaucon, and the rest of the line of the German armies had come to the positions which they were to hold so long. The retreat of the eastern wing, although more hurried than that of the western by which it was conditioned, had been conducted with the skill which marked its advance. Only at Vitry, as we saw, were there signs of extreme haste and disorder. Yet by the retreat of the western armies the flank of the army of the centre had been uncovered. That the Allies had been unable to take advantage of this was due to the German generalship and fine soldierly qualities of the men. General Foch's army had indeed threatened the exposed flank, and so relieved the pressure at Vitry; but the German line was not broken, and their retreat was orderly. For a little time it looked as though the Crown Prince's army between the Argonne and the Meuse might be cut off; but here again the disaster was averted.

The Allies found themselves now held by the enemy in this quarter from strong defensive positions; but the experience had befallen the western wing some days before. At first it was impossible to know whether the Germans were fighting a strong rearguard action preparatory to a further withdrawal or whether they were about to make a stand. That the engagements in different parts of the field were not an affair of outposts only was sufficiently clear. But the Allied advance had

been so wonderful, so apparently inevitable, that it seemed scarcely credible that it should now be checked, and checked with something of finality.

To appreciate how this came to pass it is necessary to go back a few days. Early in the morning of 11th September, the whole of the British force crossed the Ourcq "practically unopposed," and took up positions south of the Aisne from Soissons to Couvrelles. To the west lay the 6th French Army. The following day, not only this army but the whole of the British force found its advance strongly opposed. With assistance of the artillery of the 3rd Corps the French were able to throw the Germans across the river at Soissons, and the rest of the British troops advanced to positions nearer the Aisne.

On the 13th Sir John French was still unable to judge the nature of the German opposition, for reasons which will be clear later when the character of the position is described. The British were ordered to cross the river on this morning. The 1st Corps crossed without much difficulty, though the troops of the 2nd Division met with some opposition. One brigade, the 5th Infantry, had to cross in single file by means of a broken girder of the bridge, Pont-Arcy, and the 4th Guards, after a severe engagement, were driven to ferry a battalion across in boats. Still the 1st Corps were across, and their right lay some two miles north of the river. The two other corps had also crossed, and the Germans had retreated to entrenched positions on high ground "about two miles north of the river, along which runs the road, Chemin-des-Dames," a road which the war made famous for ever. Behind the advanced posts of the Allies field companies were hard at work erecting new and repairing old bridges. By the evening of the 13th it was still impossible to judge whether the enemy were making merely a temporary halt or a determined and resolute stand. A general advance was again ordered to clear up the situation.

The action of the 1st Corps on the following day, says Sir John French, "under the direction and command of Sir Douglas Haig, was of so skilful, bold, and decisive a character that he gained positions which alone have enabled me to maintain my position for more than three weeks of very severe fighting on the north bank of the river."

Between 3 o'clock and 5.30 on this morning the troops of the 1st Army Corps were in motion. The enemy's position had been carefully reconnoitred, and the movement against Troyon, which lies less than a mile from the Chemin-des-Dames, was skilfully carried out. By noon the right was north of Troyon. The factory at Troyon had been seized by the Loyal North Lancashires, but north and east the entrenched Germans barred the advance by artillery and machine-gun fire. To the west the left wing of Sir Douglas Haig's command, marching through difficult country, were able to make some progress in the Braye Valley and south of the Ostel Ridge. At night, after a heavy day's fighting, in which the British lines were several times in a precarious condition, the line rested on the Chemin-des-Dames, and ran thence through Chivry to the Cour de Soupir and thence to the Chavonne-Soissons road. The line thus lay in an almost due north-east to south-west direction, and the extreme right was supported by the French Moroccan troops to the right rear. This advanced position was almost continually under heavy fire for many days; but, against the bombardment of heavy artillery and against repeated counter-attacks, urged with all the strength and vigour which the German officers impose upon their men, the post was maintained. On the 14th the corps captured several hundred prisoners, some field pieces and machine guns. The left of the British





The Battle of the Aisne.

line lay along the north bank of the river from Vailly to Ste. Marguerite, with the Germans holding Condé and its bridge between the two divisions of the 2nd Corps. The bridge was so well guarded by the British that the position was of no use to the Germans, and not worth the loss its capture would have entailed.

On the next morning it became clear that the Germans were making no temporary halt, but had taken up positions which they had entrenched, and were prepared to hold. This defensive line extended from Compiègne to the Argonne. The country was well suited to a defensive action. Indeed, of natural defensive positions in the whole Continent of Europe there are few better, and it became apparent that the ground was no haphazard choice, but had been carefully chosen and reconnoitred in time of peace. That is one advantage which a nation possesses when it is thoroughly determined, sooner or later, to attack another.

Sir John French, with the eye of a general, thus describes the country in which this prolonged campaign was fought. "The Aisne runs generally east and west,\* and consists of a flat-bottomed depression of width varying from half a mile to two miles, down which the river follows a winding course to the west, at some points near the southern slopes of the valley and at others near the northern. The high ground both on the north and south of the river is approximately 400 feet above the bottom of the valley, and is very similar in character, as are both slopes of the valley itself, which are broken into numerous rounded spurs † and re-entrants. The most prominent of the former are the Chivre spur on the right bank and Sermoise spur on the left. Near the latter place the general plateau on the south is divided by a subsidiary valley of much the same character, down which the small river Vesle flows to the main stream near Sermoise. The slopes of the plateau overlooking the Aisne on the north and south are of varying steepness, and are covered with numerous patches of wood, which also stretch upwards and backwards over the edge on to the top of the high ground. There are several villages and small towns dotted about in the valley itself and along its sides, the chief of which is the town of Soissons.

"The Aisne is a sluggish stream of some 170 feet in breadth, but, being 15 feet deep in the centre, it is unfordable. Between Soissons on the west and Villers on the east (the part of the river attacked and secured by the British forces) there are eleven road bridges across it. On the north bank a narrow-gauge railway runs from Soissons to Vailly, where it crosses the river and continues eastward along the south bank. From Soissons to Sermoise a double line of railway runs along the south bank, turning at the latter place up the Vesle Valley towards Bazoches.

"The position held by the enemy is a very strong one, either for delaying action or for a defensive battle. One of its chief military characteristics is that from the high ground on neither side can the top of the plateau on the other side be seen except for small stretches. This is chiefly due to the woods on the edges of the slopes. Another important point is that all the bridges are under direct or high-angle artillery fire.

"The tract of country above described, which lies north of the Aisne, is well adapted to concealment, and was so skilfully turned to account by the enemy as to render it impossible to judge the real nature of his opposition to our passage of the river or accurately to gauge his strength."

\* It runs almost due south about the west of the Forest of Argonne.

† Condé owed its strength to its situation upon one of these.



This high ground lies between three and five miles from the river, and is fairly even over its whole extent. The re-entrant ravines to some extent weaken the unity of the defence, but being steep and thickly wooded, they are a strong obstacle to any offensive movement. This general description applies not only to the positions against which the British advanced, but to the whole line from the Aigle Forest to Craonne, a distance of thirty miles, only half of which was held by the British.

Between 14th and 16th September this immensely strong defensive position became articulated, as we have seen, with a line towards the east, which stretched in a convex curve across the plain of Champagne. North of Reims and south of the valley of the Suippe runs a long ridge, little more than a quarter of the elevation of the heights beyond the Aisne. In many parts it is wooded, especially in the western section, about Reims. The Germans held this ridge, the southern extremities of their line lying north of the heights of Brimont and of Nogent l'Abbesse and through the wooded country south of the railway line from Bazancourt to Grand Pré. The German centre and left had, like the right, fallen back on a carefully selected defensive line.

It had an additional advantage in the fact that a second and even stronger defensive line lay in its rear. From a little to the east of Berry-au-Bac this line follows a ridge which runs parallel to the Suippe valley, a distance of some forty miles to the Argonne. The crest is of the plateau form, dotted over with numerous wooded patches, and the slope to the river valley being practically without cover gives an admirable field of fire. The gently rising ground on the south bank is similarly commanded from the ridge. A carefully-built artificial defence could hardly follow more suitable lines, and the advantage of having so admirable a defensive line to fall back upon in case of need is obvious. The line upon which the Germans had halted held the railway from Bazancourt to Grand Pré. This railway was of great strategical importance, as it offered a ready means of supply, reinforcement, or transference of troops.

On this tremendously strong line, then, the German forces were entrenched by 16th September. Some seventy miles it stretched from the Aigle Forest to the woods of Argonne. On the east, when once the army of the Crown Prince had fallen back north of Montfaucon, it was unassailable. It could not be outflanked, it must be broken. But against a trained body of men holding such a position this was practically impossible with the numbers at the disposal of the Allies. In front, along its whole length, it was stronger than the strongest fortress. This offered an easy mark to heavy artillery, while skilful entrenchment neither offered an easy mark, nor was vulnerable to any chance shots. Men might be killed by the actual explosion of shell in the trenches, but the trenches were provided with dug-outs, so as to make such an achievement as difficult as possible.

The two armies were, by the 16th, in a state which is similar to that of two forces equal and oppositely directed. They had achieved a position of equilibrium. The Germans could not easily advance, but neither could the Allies. In several ways it is clear the advantage rested with the latter. Time fought for them as inevitably as it fought against the Germans. In driving back the Germans to the Aisne the Allies had given the check to the German plan, and it looked very much like check-mate. Taking the east and west as one whole campaign, the Germans had planned to hold the Eastern or Russian front while endeavouring to strike a decisive blow on the Western or French. The Allied plan was just the opposite. It was the

French *role* to hold, engaging as many corps as they conveniently could, while the Russians manœuvred for a vital blow on their front. Time was necessary to bring into action the vast Russian forces. With time their military resources increased and accumulated, just as the Germans inevitably decreased.

There was this vital defect in the German position in France, it was not a good position from which to resume the offensive. When the Allies had entrenched themselves it is hardly too much to say that, except at a cost which the Germans could not afford to pay, a renewed offensive was impossible. The Germans were, therefore, not only holding but securely held. That the Germans did not view the positions in this light was shown by their violent attempts to break the French line about Reims. The chief advantage that remained to the Germans after six weeks of the war was that they were fighting in the enemy's instead of their own country.

But such a position of check was as abhorrent to the French as to the Germans, and it was necessary that they should not be allowed to rest, or they would be able to throw further reinforcements on to the Eastern front. At this moment General Rennenkampf was retiring from East Prussia, and the Russians were inflicting a smashing defeat upon the Austrians.

General Joffre, taking stock of the situation, saw that the only way to drive the Germans from their position was to attack their western flank. The 6th French Army, on the British left, was reinforced and ordered to move against the German flank; and on the 18th the Allied Commander-in-Chief resolved to make a more determined effort to envelop the German right. To meet such attacks the Germans transferred troops from their left in Lorraine to their right flank, but in spite of this the Allies gained some ground towards Noyon, on the right bank of the Oise. It was, no doubt, to relieve this flank by creating a diversion and by pinning the British to their ground that, on the 17th, 18th, and 19th the British line was heavily bombarded almost continuously, and the line at different points was compelled to repulse violent counter-attacks both day and night. Sir John French now organised a regular system of relief in the trenches by using the infantry of the 6th Division which had come up on the 16th.

On 19th September the Germans took the heights of Brimont, and these, with the heights of Nogent l'Abbesse, gave them advanced posts valuable for offence as well as defence. They also made a serious counter-attack on the line in the neighbourhood of Craonne. They were thrown back after a fierce struggle, the French taking many prisoners. On this day, too, they opened fire on the beautiful cathedral at Reims, and as no conceivable military reason could be pleaded for such an action, the French issued a protest to the neutral Powers. Much more significant than these engagements were two French actions in other parts of the line. The village of Souain, east of Reims, was taken, and with it 1,000 prisoners; and the Germans were forced to evacuate the district of Avricourt. By this latter success the process of clearing the French territory about Nancy was complete. By the capture of Souain the French had advanced a stage further in a carefully conceived attack upon the railway in the rear of the German line.

On 23rd September the pressure of the extreme western flank of the French army under Castelnau began to have effect, and the violent fighting along the Oise removed pressure from the section of the line held by the British. The French advanced on the following day upon Roye and occupied Péronne, from which violent



counter-attacks failed to dislodge them. There were several fierce engagements also at Noyon. Reinforcements were hurried across, and on the 25th were posted in strength at St. Quentin. The Germans were alive to the danger at this point and had taken precautions. It was ascertained that some of these reinforcements were drawn from the German centre. In the next few days such pressure was exerted by the Germans in this region that the French had to fall back towards Albert.

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On the day which saw the French occupation of Péronne the Germans had succeeded in gaining a footing in a much more important quarter. They had not been dislodged from Thiaucourt. The country immediately to the south had been cleared of the enemy, and the French held the neighbourhood of Verdun, immediately north. Thiaucourt, protected to some extent against an attack from the south by a belt of lake and forest land, formed an admirable centre for an attack upon the Meuse fortifications. Fort Troyon had been almost reduced from the western side. It was now attacked from the east. On 24th September the Germans secured a footing on the heights of the Meuse and began a heavy bombardment of the defensive works Paroches, on the western, and Camp des Romaines, on the eastern side of the Meuse. The French, realising the importance of the movement, advanced from Toul towards Beaumont, but, in consequence of the difficult country lying between them and the Germans, could not relieve the forts. On the 26th the Camp des Romaines fell; Paroches fell later, and the Germans crossed the Meuse.

The significance of this success was extremely great. The fortress barrier had been pierced, and if the Germans could make use of the gap it would give them one very great advantage, and at the same time would change the whole character of the French campaign. It would give them shorter and safer communications, an end which motivated their attack upon Fort Troyon; and, as the French movement against the Oise threatened their present main line of communications, this would be an enormous advantage. But it would also turn the eastern section of the present French line. If a strong force could be passed through the gap it could take the French line in the rear; it would automatically force back the advance in the neighbourhood of Nancy, and would enable the Germans to regain the initiative. Even if the gap could not at once be used for these purposes, it was hoped that the threat would create a sufficient diversion to relieve the German right by compelling the French to send a strong force to secure the opening against a possible advance.

This gateway of the plain of Champagne was held for several days—indeed it was held for months—without the Germans securing any of the results which might naturally have been expected. The French Commander-in-Chief showed no anxiety. He continued to push his outflanking movement in the Oise neighbourhood, and by a suitable disposition prevented any issue through the gap. A northern movement from Toul and a southern from Verdun even threatened the German communications with the rail at Thiaucourt. But, although he was able to destroy the German bridge across the Meuse at St. Mihiel, General Joffre could not oust the enemy from their footing on the Meuse heights.

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On the day upon which the two Meuse forts fell the Germans recommenced a

violent bombardment of the whole British front, and vigorous counter-attacks were delivered at various points. The attacks continued until the evening of 28th September, but nowhere did they achieve any success. The severity of the struggle may be gauged by the fact that between 12th September and 8th October the British, in killed, wounded, and missing, alone lost 561 officers and 12,980 men. This is about 8 per cent. of the numbers engaged.

A great part of the Battle of the Aisne was fought in wet weather, and the intermitting bursts of sunshine could not dry or warm the soaked men. The new trench life was taken to readily and cheerfully, and the troops became skilful in digging their trenches and caves, which at some points were only a few hundred yards from the German trenches. Numbers of the British soldiers made use of the stone quarries. Inside the trenches shrapnel could be defied; but, as an officer wrote, "Nothing on earth will prevent a British soldier from lighting a fire to cook his tea, nor from going round to borrow a light for his cigarette. Then the shrapnel catches him." The trenches on both sides were elaborately constructed and cleverly concealed. The woods facilitated concealment on the part of the Germans, and wire entanglements and rabbit fencing gave ample protection against surprise.

The Germans made great use of their artillery, and from the statements of prisoners it has been gathered that they have been disappointed in the small amount of moral effect produced by this means. "The British soldier," wrote an "Eye-witness on the staff of Sir John French," "is a difficult person to impress or depress, even by immense shells filled with high explosives which detonate with terrific violence and form craters large enough to act as graves for five horses. The German howitzer shells are eight or nine inches in calibre, and on impact they send up columns of greasy black smoke. On account of this they are irreverently dubbed 'Coal-boxes,' 'Black Marias,' or 'Jack Johnsons' by the soldiers.

"Men who take things in this spirit are, it seems, likely to throw out the calculations based on loss of *moral* so carefully framed by the German military philosophers."

The Germans merely won still further infamy by their bombardment of Reims Cathedral. On two occasions it was fired on by heavy guns; and that it took fire so easily is due to the scaffolding erected to restore it, and also to the fact that straw had been laid on the floor for the reception of German wounded. There was no justification for such an act of vandalism, though the Germans said it had been made a place of observation. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* justified the action, and comforted itself by the reflection that victory would bring forth greater and more splendid works! The Cathedral was not ruined. The shell was left intact. But the inside was burned out, much of the beautiful carving was ruined, and the splendid glass of the nave was destroyed. The flag of the Red Cross was flying from the Cathedral at the time of the bombardment, but it proved no protection. It was natural that the Germans should wish to retake Reims. A city of such importance was necessarily the junction of several good roads and railways. But the thought of the ruin of this splendid monument of the Middle Ages, in which are enshrined so many of France's most sacred memories, will cling for ever to the German name.

At the end of the month the Indian troops had landed at Marseilles, and Sir John French had begun to wonder whether the British troops could not be more usefully employed on the western flank. Two divisions of the army were mobilising for the relief of Antwerp, which was now near its fall. The Germans were firmly



established in the entrenched positions which they were to hold so long. They too were transferring their troops; and prisoners taken by the British were found to belong to the Active Army, and various classes of the Reserve. With the transference of the British troops to the north, an operation which began on 3rd October, and the operations for the relief of Antwerp, there were gathering the elements of a new and even more violent campaign in Flanders. In this way the Battle of the Aisne merges into the siege of Antwerp, the offensive operations from which were, to a great extent, responsible for both the defeat of the Marne and the possibility of reducing the Germans to immobility on the Aisne.

## XII. THE FALL OF ANTWERP.

"The proposition which the German Government makes to us reproduces that contained in the ultimatum of August 2. Faithful to her international obligations, Belgium can only reiterate her reply to the ultimatum, the more that since August 3 her neutrality has been violated, an unhappy war has been waged in her territory and that the guarantors of her neutrality have loyally and at once responded to her appeal."—  
[Reply of Belgian Government to renewed German overtures received August 10, 1914.]

WHILE the Allied armies were settling down to an entirely new form of warfare and a unique campaign on the Aisne, momentous events were taking place in Belgium. As we have seen, the Belgian sortie from Antwerp in the second week of September was made at a crucial moment in the Western campaign. The Battle of the Marne had not yet become the Battle of the Aisne. In a campaign, just as in the meeting of more material forces, where the *ensemble* of opposing forces is fairly equal at the moment, there is a temporary oscillation before a position of equilibrium is struck. An additional weight applied to either side before this is achieved will produce motion in the direction of the weaker force. It is this fact which explains the importance of the Belgian sortie. New German forces thrown into the field before each side had converted its position into a formidable fortress might have given the enemy just the impetus necessary to enable them to retrieve the retreat from Paris. That those forces could not arrive before the Allies, like the Germans, had dug themselves in was largely due to the Belgian sortie, and this sortie determined the fate of Antwerp. The Germans resolved that there should be no more sorties at inopportune moments, and to make them impossible the only thing to do was to take Antwerp. With it they hoped to take also the Belgian army.

The operations which compassed the fall of Antwerp merged the siege of Antwerp into the campaign of the Aisne. When, "early in October," Sir John French suggested to General Joffre the withdrawal of the British force from the Aisne to "the northern flank of the Allies" there can be no doubt he hoped that, with the British troops already dispatched and about to be dispatched to Belgium, his soldiers might support the relief of Antwerp and succeed in taking up a line in Belgium—west of the Scheldt perhaps—with Antwerp as its northern bastion. The plan was still-born, largely because the relief troops were not placed under French and acted on no fixed plan.

Antwerp was, quite rationally, held to be a fortress of immense strength, and was considered capable of holding out for a considerable time, even allowing for the new conception of fortresses introduced by this war. It has strong natural defences

The north-west is guarded by the sea ; the west is protected by the Durme and the Scheldt, and the area between it and the Dutch frontier which can be flooded. The Scheldt and Rupel guard the south ; and the Rupel and Nethe protect the south-east and east. And these rivers, which leave only a line of country some fifteen miles in extent unprotected, encircle the town at a convenient distance.

But it has a triple ring of barriers beside this circle of rivers. Round the town itself there is a deep ditch, an entrenchment which infantry with machine guns could hold against all "rush" tactics. Beyond this, at an average distance of two



The Fortress of Antwerp.

miles, there is a belt of forts at intervals of about a mile and a third. This line of forts makes an arc on the Scheldt, and thus the northern part of the town, which has no river obstacle, is included. All these were old forts, built from forty to fifty years ago, but still formidable against the artillery of their period, and indeed against any but the heavy artillery of to-day. Beyond these defences, again, at a distance of from six to nine miles from the town, was an outer ring of modern forts. The earliest of these were built not more than thirty-five years ago, and the completion of the most modern took place not six years ago. All these forts suffered from the essential weakness of every stationary defence. The exact range and most con-



venient point of attack can be thought out at leisure, and in time of war the only thing that remains is to advance the heavy guns to those points and open the bombardment.

As a prelude to the attack proper upon Antwerp an airship flew over the city on the night of 24th September, and dropped bombs. It is not easy to see what this was supposed to effect, and the military situation was not even remotely changed by it. Two days later a more serious movement began. German troops moved out towards Malines and Termonde. The latter movement was, perhaps, intended to be a belated attempt to cut Antwerp off from communication with the coast ; but it was singularly ill-conceived and as a fact unsuccessful. The troops came into contact at the village of Audegem, some two and a half miles south-west of Termonde, and though the handful of Belgian infantry were greatly outnumbered, they held on so stubbornly that reinforcements were able to reach them, and the Germans were driven towards Alost, losing over a hundred prisoners as well as many killed and wounded.

The following day Malines was occupied after a final bombardment, and another movement was initiated towards Termonde. Lebbeke, a village some three miles south-east of Termonde, was the centre of this movement which was directed from Wetteren, Lebbeke, Buggenhout. The Belgians, again outnumbered, gave way at first until reinforcements came, when the Germans were driven off to Alost and Merchten. The Germans made numerous small attacks at other points in an endeavour to cross the river, but no success was thus far obtained.

The occupation of Malines gave the Germans a good position for their siege howitzers. From the city they could command Fort de Breendonck and the redoubt Letterheide to the west, and as far as Fort de Lierre to the east. But Fort de Waelhem and Fort de Wavre S. Catherine, standing hard by three miles north, were naturally the first objective of the heavy guns. A bombardment was opened upon these two forts on 28th September. All the day and night and the following day the heavy shells fell upon these two forts. Fort de Wavre S. Catherine, almost a complete ruin at the time, was finally put out of action on the second day by a shell which exploded the magazine. The heroism of the defenders impelled them to fight to the last ; but no purpose could be served by remaining in a ruin without a single effective gun.

A worse disaster befell the Belgians on 30th September. Fort de Lierre and Fort de Koningshoyckt now came more directly under the fire of the howitzers ; and Fort de Waelhem, which bore the brunt of the bombardment, was able to maintain a desultory fire until all three were reduced to ruins on 1st October. But a shell from the heavy guns worked irreparable damage in another direction. The day before the forts were reduced the main waterworks of Antwerp were destroyed, and the city was left to the dangers of fire and epidemic. It was not wholly without water, indeed, but the water system was at an end and the supply was very much restricted. Such was the position of Antwerp at this moment : the outer forts between the Senne and the Grande Nethe had fallen, and the water supply in the city was being doled out from wells. Part of the village of Lierre was in flames, and the troops in the trenches had already been for several days under artillery fire. Some three German army corps, about 120,000 men, lay outside ready for the attack when the moment came. Between them and the inner line of the forts still lay the Nethe, and entrenched positions lay beyond.

But once the troops withdrew across the Nethe on 2nd October, the city lay at the mercy of the Germans, for the range of the 11-inch howitzers is greater than the distance between the Nethe and Antwerp. On this day a Taube aeroplane flying over the city dropped copies of a proclamation from the German commander, General von Beseler, impressing upon the people the hopelessness of their state, and endeavouring with characteristic ineptitude to set them against their newspapers, their officers, and, of course, "perfidious Albion." To encourage a revolution to overthrow the military authorities and force a surrender may have been the German idea. Needless to say it had no effect of the sort; but it probably caused people to wonder if the optimistic assurances of the press were quite justified.

The situation was indeed bad, and it was determined that the Government and foreign representatives should leave the city. Everything was put in readiness for the departure. The boats lay ready and the hour of departure was fixed. Early the next morning all was haste and confusion until the time for the arranged departure had almost arrived, when it was announced that the plans had been changed and the city was to be defended. The reason of this change, when it became known, acted like a powerful tonic. The Belgian Government had appealed to Great Britain for help, and it was now known that reinforcements were actually at hand. But many residents in the foreign colonies left, and thousands of people commenced to leave the city.

That night a British Marine Brigade, under General Paris, reached Antwerp. Their arrival had an electrical effect upon the Belgian soldiers. Ever courageous and gay, it is not too much to say their splendid spirit won the admiration of the world. But a constant rain of shrapnel while it could not damp their courage had overwrought their nerves. Now, the *Times'* special correspondent reports, they marched to the trenches with all their old spirit, whole troops singing.

Yet a calm review of the situation reveals little enough cause for rejoicing. A Marine Brigade, comprising 2,200 of all ranks, had arrived in the city, whose outer defence had fallen. The military commander had greater reason for rejoicing, for he knew that two Naval Brigades were to follow, and that their function was merely to hold out a few days. "The Naval Division," as Mr. Churchill explained later, "was sent to Antwerp, not as an isolated incident, but as part of a large operation for the relief of the city." The 3rd Cavalry and 7th Infantry Division were at the moment mobilising in England in preparation for a combined movement against the German besieging force. Everything depended upon time. But the Germans were pressing hard against Waelhem. Once, in the night between the 3rd and 4th, they succeeded in putting a pontoon in position on the river, and it was immediately crowded with soldiers. But the Belgian fire blew the pontoon and its occupants to bits.

Early in the morning the Marine Brigade replaced the exhausted Belgians in the section of the trenches facing Lierre. Their advanced posts lay on the Nethe. All the day the trenches were under a persistent bombardment which increased towards the evening, and was extended as far as Contich. The river, it appears, was not under fire from the trenches, and hence on 5th October the advanced posts were driven in. About midday the 7th Belgian Regiment, which lay to the right of the Marines, was forced to retire. This left the Marines' right flank exposed, but a brilliant counter-attack by Colonel Tierchon, with the 2nd Chasseurs, assisted by British aeroplanes, recaptured the lost position in the afternoon. The situation



was considered to be so precarious that both the Burgomaster and the military commander recommended the citizens to leave the city.

During the night the enemy made more persistent attempts to cross the river. They paid very heavily for their temerity. A handful would get across after a determined attempt, only to be shot down almost immediately on the other side. The movement, repeated again and again, at length succeeded, and the Germans had a footing on the city side of the river. The two Naval Brigades arrived while this struggle was in progress. They brought the British force inside the fortifications up to between 7,000 and 8,000 men of all ranks. But many of the men were poorly equipped and still more poorly trained.

The Belgians made repeated attacks on the Germans in the morning of the 6th to throw them across the river, but they were unable to do so, and practically the whole of the Belgian trenches were evacuated. The position of the Marine Brigade was now untenable, and under a heavy bombardment they retired to a position slightly to the rear. This had been hastily prepared, but could not be held for long, and in the afternoon the 1st Naval Brigade moved out to assist their withdrawal to the main second line of defence.

The position of the city was now desperate. The Germans notified General de Guise, the Belgian commander, that they should bombard the city unless it was evacuated, and they asked for plans which marked the chief architectural features and hospitals so that these might be avoided as much as possible. The plans were delivered, but General de Guise refused to surrender. That evening no street lamps were lighted. For some days Antwerp had been early abed; but that night she had to go at dusk. The Government determined to leave on the morrow, and embarked in the evening with those of the foreign residents not yet departed. A methodical movement began to render Antwerp as useless as possible to the enemy. Ships in the harbour were put *hors de combat* by blowing up essential parts of their machinery. Despair had not set in. Relief might still come, it was hoped, but the heroic defenders were preparing for the worst. All day Contich and as far as Vieux-Dieu, hardly a mile from Fort No. 4 of the inner line, had been under bombardment. At night the Marine Brigade completed its retirement, and the Naval Division took up stations between the forts of the second line of defence. The Belgian army began to withdraw towards the coast.

On 7th October preparations for withdrawal continued. The large oil tanks on the west banks of the Scheldt were set on fire, so that the valuable supply should not fall into the hands of the Germans. The dangerous animals at the Zoo were shot for fear they might be set free in the bombardment and add to the horrors of the hour. An almost continuous stream of fugitives now filled the roads, the bridges, and the quays. They crowded the trains and filled the boats; all anxious to get away from the doomed city, with its ominous pillar of fire and smoke ascending in the background.

More significant than any of these events was the belated assault on the Scheldt from Termonde to Wetteren. In this tragedy of the "Too late" it is almost the most wonderful of all its amazing factors that the German military commander should only now have made a determined effort to cut off Antwerp from its line of retreat. Reinforcements had found no trouble in getting into the city, and only on the 6th and the 7th had the Germans made a determined effort to cut the railway and invest the whole circuit of the Antwerp defences. It was too late. The

Germans on these two days did succeed in forcing the river at Termonde and Weteren, but their advance against the railway between the Scheldt and the Durme was barred by Belgian cavalry.

At midnight on the 7th the bombardment of the city began. The town, forts, and trenches were now the object of a rain of shrapnel which continued until the morning of the 9th with increasing intensity. The heavy siege artillery was not used, and it is due to this that the city suffered so little damage. But it needed little of this to persuade the remaining inhabitants of Antwerp to leave. In the morning the huge stream began to flow. By road, rail, and river they fled. Any sort of vehicle, and anything which would float, had its little human tragedy within it. Families torn up by the roots, all sorts and conditions of men, from flourishing merchants and tradesmen to the flotsam and jetsam of humanity, were to be found early on foot, making their way out of the city. Between a quarter and half a million left on this day, fully a half walking northward across the frontiers to the kindly hospitality of the Dutch. At night but a handful remained.

General Paris now saw that the city could not be held any longer, and that unless he wished to court disaster he must draw off his force under cover of darkness. General de Guise agreed, and ordered the roads and bridges to be cleared for the passage. "The retirement," says General Paris, "began about 7.30 P.M., and was carried out under very difficult conditions.

"The enemy were reported in force (a Division plus a Reserve Brigade) on our immediate line of retreat, rendering necessary a detour of fifteen miles to the north.

"All the roads were crowded with Belgian troops, refugees, herds of cattle, and all kinds of vehicles, making intercommunication practically an impossibility. Partly for these reasons, partly on account of fatigue, and partly from at present unexplained causes, large numbers of the 1st Naval Brigade became detached, and I regret to say are either prisoners or interned in Holland.

"Marching all night (8th and 9th October), one battalion of the 1st Brigade, the 2nd Brigade, and Royal Marine Brigade, less one battalion, entrained at St. Gillies Waes, and effected their retreat without further incident.

"The Battalion (Royal Marine Brigade) Rearguard of the whole force also entrained late in the afternoon, together with many hundreds of refugees, but at Morbeke \* the line was cut, the engine derailed, and the enemy opened fire.

"There was considerable confusion. It was dark, and the agitation of the refugees made it difficult to pass army orders. However, the battalion behaved admirably and succeeded in fighting its way through, but with a loss in missing of more than half its numbers. They then marched another ten miles to Selzaate, † and entrained there."

This, in an unemotional wording of an official dispatch, describes the withdrawal of the British force. About 1,600 men crossed the Dutch frontier, and were interned in Holland according to the provisions of international law. Some 20,000 Belgian troops were lost to the Allied cause through the same misadventure. The British casualties came in addition to nearly 1,000 men killed, wounded, and missing.

About midday on 9th October a small body of Germans entered the city by the Porte de Malines and drove up to the town hall. In a few minutes the Burgomaster

\* A station on the branch line, which runs parallel for some distance to the main line from Antwerp to Ostend, and connects St. Gillies Waes with Ecloo.

† On the branch line from St. Gillies Waes to Ecloo, where it touches the Dutch frontier.



appeared, and was informed that Antwerp was a German city. He then drove out to the military commander to arrange the formalities of surrender. A little later a number of batteries of artillery went through the city and engaged the rearguard of the retreating Belgians on the opposite bank of the river. Several of the forts still held out. But the vast bulk of the Belgian army had escaped, there were practically none of the inhabitants left, all the most valuable material had been destroyed, and it was merely the empty shell of the city which fell into German hands. The damage to the city from the bombardment was not very great ; but the deserted city was of little value to the Germans.

On the following day a splendid spectacular display was given for the edification of the German Staff, one or two Americans, and the empty buildings which peered down upon the glittering pageant with the chilling stare of sightless eyes. One of the American spectators, Mr. E. A. Powell, of the *New York World*, describes the parade of 60,000 men before the German commander and the German Governor of Antwerp, Admiral von Schroder. Their marching songs, according to Mr. Powell, were characteristic. The long, glittering lines, swung through the streets of the Scheldt port singing with characteristic German humour " Die Wacht am Rhein " ; and, with that colossal irony which the world now associates with German militarism as its most distinguishing feature, they made the streets of this last stronghold of betrayed, outraged, and ruined Belgium resound with Luther's hymn, " Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott." If Luther with prophetic insight had been attempting to describe the essential Germany as it impresses the world to-day, in no more crushingly ironical epigram could he have done so than in this line of his inspiring hymn : " A strong fortress is our God."

To the British the most tragic episode of the defence and fall of Antwerp will ever be the attempt to save the fortress at the last moment by the dispatch of a Naval Division. This handful of men, some of them ill-equipped to an extent that seems almost incredible, some untrained to the extent of not knowing how to load and fire a rifle, arrived only when it was already too late. Fortresses paradoxically enough are not meant to be besieged nowadays. They are safe only so long as they are preserved from attack, a fact which the French applied to the protection of Verdun. A city is, in many ways, a great handicap. The Aisne campaign shows what skilful entrenchment can do. But if Paris or Berlin had lain within the range of siege artillery beyond the trenches the introduction of this factor would have so weakened the defenders that the stand at the Aisne could hardly have lasted a week.

If the entrenchments are made with sufficient skill and a sufficient distance from the city, properly manned, there is no reason why they should not hold out for an indefinite period. But when the British arrived at Antwerp the outer line had already fallen, the city had come within the range of the German guns, and to hold the inner lines there were sent 8,000 men at most. Their rôle was simply to hold on until the rest of the relieving force could take the besiegers on the left flank. At the moment General Paris found it impossible to hold out any longer, the relieving force was disembarking on the Belgian coast. And as the Naval Division was making its way towards the coast, the 7th Infantry and 3rd Cavalry Division were concentrating at Bruges and Ostend, and the main British force was gathering north of Lille. The various factors of the movement were not sufficiently correlated. It was no more than a chance that they should succeed from the outset. Yet the

attempt was made, and the orderly retirement of the Belgian troops was facilitated and another opportunity given to the British troops to show to the world how they could face all odds—even lack of training and deficient equipment—with heroic steadfastness.

### XIII. RETREAT AND RECOIL.

“The military advisers of the Kaiser now know that they hopelessly underestimated the fighting capacity and generalship of the Russians, whose armies alike in attack and defence have splendidly distinguished themselves.”—[Lord Sydenham in the *Times*, February 4, 1915.]

GENERAL VON HINDENBURG, who had inflicted so sharp a defeat upon the Russian troops in the region of Tannenberg, did not rest content with his laurels. He was the only German general who had so far achieved anything which the unbiassed would recognise as a victory. He was now in charge of the new German 9th Army, and was preparing operations in Poland. But before handing over the 8th Army to General von Schubert he ordered it to press on through the Mazurian lake district, a very difficult country of swamps and woods, with narrow defiles through them. Rennenkampf was still standing his ground on the northern part of East Prussia, but the advance of Schubert threatened to place him in a dangerous position. The German columns moving from the river Alle across this region were operating in country known to them; but it could not be sufficiently known to the Russians. Rennenkampf, therefore, wisely resolved to fall back. Two corps at Lyck were almost cut off by the Germans, but Rennenkampf was able to extricate his main force from its dangerous position and draw it off towards the east. Hindenburg pressed on to Suwalki and established a German administration; but the Russians succeeded in arresting the offensive towards the north and gradually retired on the Niemen. By 23rd September Rennenkampf was across the Niemen and waiting for the German advance.

**The Niemen.**—The Germans marched from Suwalki and Lyck towards the Niemen over a country which was similar to that on the Prussian side of the frontier. Here, as in the Mazurian lake district, there are few roads, and they are so narrow that they are better described as defiles. The German army crossed the country in a number of narrow ribbons towards Drusskeniki and Sopotskin. They were allowed to march through the marsh and woodland to the Niemen, and at Drusskeniki even to throw their pontoons across the river. The Germans at once crowded on to the pontoons; but at this point heavy guns from the right bank of the Niemen opened fire, and the pontoon bridge with the onrushing soldiers were smashed to bits.

The German artillery then engaged the Russians for some time, and when the latter had ceased to reply the Germans, thinking they had silenced their antagonists, again attempted to cross, and once more were thrown back. The attack upon Sopotskin was made at the same time, and with no better success. The Russians the following day, 26th September, assumed the offensive, and the Germans fell back. They were now in much the same situation as Samsonoff's army, being compelled to retire in an unknown country of swamp, lake, and forest. They were pressed on by a vigorous enemy. One position after another they attempted to hold to re-form and save themselves. From one position to another they were driven



by their relentless enemy. With heavy loss day by day the Russians took toll for their fallen brothers who lay in the East Prussian swamps. They forced the Germans on at high speed. They compelled the wearied troops to hurry forward at a speed fifty per cent. higher than that at which an army normally travels. The large army of 400,000 men which had set out so buoyantly towards the Niemen made its way back dispirited. The retreat had become general by 1st October, the Germans at Mariampol being unable to maintain their position once the southern section of the line had fallen back.

Reinforcements could not be brought up in time to be of use. They had gained the victory at Tannenberg by means of their railways. They were now on Russian soil, where railways are few. In this district the only railway was of no use to them, and they experienced the disastrous effects of having allowed themselves to become dependent upon a mechanism. Their position was characteristic of the German leading in the war. Confronted with a set problem, it did not rest until the correct solution was found, but when the unexpected met them they were unable to grapple with it as rapidly as their opponents. They had thoughtlessly marched into a trap. Samsonoff had at least to be driven into the German trap; his victorious opponent spontaneously walked into the Russian. As the Germans retreated across the defiles they were allowed no rest. The guns constantly threw shells amongst them. Cavalry harassed them perpetually.

**Augustowo.**—In such fashion the German troops fell back upon Augustowo. Here they attempted to make a stand, the line stretching north through Suwalki and south to the fortress of Osowiec. At Suwalki the Germans held fortified positions and were strongly entrenched. But repeated bayonet charges, urged with the fierce valour of the Russians, at length drove the Germans back. Their losses were terrible. According to the reports of prisoners only twenty were left of several detachments of a hundred. On 3rd October Augustowo was once more in Russian hands, and the Germans were in headlong flight across the frontier. The small Russian frontier fortress of Osowiec had been invested, and since 26th September had been persistently bombarded. The siege had now been raised. The Russian line was rapidly advancing. The Germans had been driven over the frontier to the north, and as the small force operating against Osowiec fell back the Russian cavalry were upon them and harrying them in their retreat. In the Battle of Augustowo thousands of prisoners were taken, and many guns, convoy, and ammunition wagons.

Rennenkampf was not content to stop at this point any more than Schubert had been content to rest after Tannenberg. Pressing forward day by day, harrying the Germans to the limit of the powers of his troops, he followed up the victory of Augustowo and relief of Osowiec, and was soon once more installed on German soil. No one sensational victory such as that at Tannenberg had marked his offensive; but by daily local successes, by inflicting loss at every stage of the retreat, by driving the Germans sometimes in utter disorder before him, and by the violence with which he had driven the enemy from fortified positions at Suwalki and Augustowo, he had amply avenged the unfortunate and gallant Samsonoff. Schubert at once retired into oblivion. When the Tsar went to the front a few days later, he insisted on stopping the train to congratulate the defenders of Osowiec.

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Meanwhile the Russians operating in Galicia had pressed forward. By the

middle of the month the Russian troops were closing in upon the great Galician fortress of Przemyśl. Numbers were of little account to them, and hence they were able to detach a force sufficient to invest the fortress and reduce it at their leisure, while the main body pressed on. The advance was admirably conducted, and correlated with the movements on the San and the Vistula which were sweeping back the Austro-German armies. Sambor was taken, and the Russians closed in upon Sieniawa and Jarosław. At each engagement numbers of guns and prisoners were taken. Around Sandomir some 3,000 Austrians and Germans fell into the Russian hands. On 18th September, Jarosław and Przemyśl were both under bombardment; fire had broken out in the town of Jarosław.

Sambor, on the southern railway line to Cracow, had given that line into Russian control, and Jarosław commanded the northern and main line. In Przemyśl there was a garrison of 80,000, and part of Auffenberg's army had joined them. On 22nd September Jarosław was taken, and Brussiloff and Dimitrieff hastened forward towards Cracow. In a few days Rzeszów was occupied, and two fortified positions north of Przemyśl had fallen. By the beginning of October the Germans and Austrians were concentrating about Cracow, the Galician door into Silesia.

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The centre of interest was now moving northwards. The 9th German Army was concentrating in Poland on the Silesian front. Their lines extended from the Warta to the neighbourhood of Cracow. Behind them lay an extraordinary network of railways on the German side of the frontier, and these facilitated the bringing up of fresh troops and the redistribution of troops over the line. The Tsar had come to the front, and went about unprotected talking with his soldiers in a way which would have been impossible before the war. In face of this new threat of invasion by at least 250,000 Germans, the Russian Staff made new dispositions, and waited for the moment to strike. It held and for some months retained the initiative, and became the most puzzling and fearful factor in the war to the German Staff.

**Second Austrian Offensive in Serbia.**—Meanwhile the Serbs were adding to the Austrian humiliation. After the disasters in Galicia the Austrian Staff seems to have determined to write off something of its humiliation and retrieve its shrinking prestige by achieving victory in the Servian field. The task, however congenial, can hardly have been a dignified one. They were in a somewhat similar position to the Germans invading Belgium. Success added little glory to their arms; failure stamped deeper their humiliation. After the Servian victories at Shabatz and on the Drina and Save, the Austrians attempted to forestall further failures by labelling the campaign "punishment" and no longer war. If the refractory Balkan State struggled, paternal Austria might reflect, "what child of spirit would not?" But war or punishment, the Austrians must demonstrate their superiority.

At the beginning of September the punishment expedition was re-formed. By the end of the first week a quarter of a million men lay along the Servian frontiers on the Drina as far south as Liubovija, and on the Danube as far east as Weisskirchen. The Servians, thinking the strong position of Valievo, lying in mountainous country, had been proved too difficult to make it profitable to attack, held the Drina but weakly. They expected the main blow from the Danube to Save. It was, therefore, inevitable that the Austrians attacking at Liubovija in some force should gain greater success than at Bielina and Loznitza, where they had been thrown back. The engagement was hotly contested, and the Austrians paid dearly



for their success, which established about 30,000 men across the Drina in a position of great strength.

The following day an Austrian army tried to force the river at Racha, in the north-west angle of Serbia, and at first drove the Servians before them. The latter, however, contesting every inch of the ground, held on until reinforcements came up, and the Austrians were repulsed with heavy loss. Numbers of prisoners and quantities of material were taken. Two days later a fiercely contested engagement turned into a Servian victory, and the Serbs occupied Semlin, the ancient Hungarian city, which in the strange rhythmic flow of the war on this front was to change hands several times. The Serbs also entered Bosnia towards Vishegrad, and with the Montenegrins pushed on towards Serajevo, the capital, their hope being that this action would relieve the pressure on the Liubovija. The position at this point was probably unique in warfare. On the west front the Austrians were in Serbia, while slightly to the south the Servians were in the Austrian province of Bosnia; and on the northern front the Serbs were established between the Austrian forces west and east at Semlin.

Reinforcements were brought up to the Austrians on the west front. Their objective was to turn the whole Servian position; but the Serbs also reinforced their line in the threatened quarter, and, when the Austrians attacked violently between Zvornik and Liubovija, were able to fall back in an orderly manner and at length to hold the enemy. The Servian offensive in Bosnia was being maintained, and on 14th September they took Vishegrad. At the same time another Servian force had crossed the Drina at Biana-Bashta, and there was now a considerable force in Semlin. Bad weather had set in, and when the Serbs took the offensive against the Austrians in Serbia, manœuvring large bodies of men and heavy guns became a matter of extreme difficulty. After a three days' battle the Serbs drove in the Austrian right wing, which was held by the 16th Corps, whose commander was later relieved, as was also the commander of another corps operating against Serbia. The repulse turned into a decisive defeat—the second in this quarter—and discouraged further operations.

Another attempt to cross the Drina farther to the north was made on the 20th and 21st, but the Austrians were unable to make any impression on the Servian defensive, and they lost numbers of men in the Servian counter-offensive. A little later an attack began along the Danube frontier, which threatened the Servian position at Semlin, and the city had to be evacuated. The Austrians succeeded in gaining a footing in the Shabatz district, where the flat country was more suitable for orthodox military operations, but in their attempt to capture positions near Belgrade and to cross the Danube at Semendria, they were unsuccessful. About the same time the Montenegrins were at the gates of the city of Serajevo, and the threat somewhat relieved the engagement in the Shabatz district. The Serbs had gained complete control of the operations on the Danube, and with an energetic counter-offensive established themselves once again in Semlin.

Such was their position at the end of September. The significance of the struggle in the Servian field at first sight seems but slight. Austria in conquering Serbia gained no glory. Beaten, she was humiliated before the world. But it must be remembered that all the time that Serbia could engage a number of Austrian army corps, she relieved Russia of that additional number of enemies in Galicia. Serbia, like Belgium, before the fall of Antwerp, and like the Belgian, British, and French

Allies in Belgium and France, was doing her part in enabling the Russian armies to play with success their *rôle* in the war which at that time was thought to be the crushing of the military power of the Austro-German Allies.

#### XIV. THE WAR ON THE SEAS.

"We shall know how to take all precautions compatible with the rights of belligerents and the respect for neutral Powers. Our grip on Germany will not cease until she has been crushed."—[Mr. Churchill, in an interview granted to the *Matin*, February, 1915.]

THE battle in Heligoland Bight had shown the world that the British navy was not only ready to fight—it was more than ready, it was eager. Not that fighting was necessarily its function. If it could protect the British shores and British trade, and maintain the blockade without engaging, so much the better. This is a fact too often ignored. The navy retains command of the seas until its position is challenged; and if it can preserve perfect freedom of action for its own ships and at the same time sweep the enemy's flag from the sea without striking a blow its *rôle* is perfectly fulfilled. The necessity to attack and defeat the German fleet only arose when the fleet threatened the security of the British shipping, or attempted to re-establish security for its own.

Yet although the German fleet did neither, it would no doubt have been more satisfactory to attack and defeat it, and so remove so powerful a threat to British security. It was with such an object in view that the operations issuing in the Battle of Heligoland Bight had been undertaken, and in the second week in September the British fleet made "a complete sweep of the North Sea up to and into the Heligoland Bight." The challenge was as pointed as it could be made, but "no German ship of any kind was seen at sea."

The blockade of Germany was maintained and command of the sea retained in spite of the movements of the small number of German cruisers yet at large, which sought to initiate a retaliatory blockade by attacks on the Allied shipping and possessions in various parts of the world. The most notorious of these cruisers was the *Emden*, which when the war broke out was at Kiaochau. For some time this cruiser, which could steam twenty-four knots, had a sensational career in the Indian Ocean. It had not been heard of for six weeks, when it suddenly appeared in the Bay of Bengal, and in four days captured six merchant vessels. Five it sank, and the sixth it sent to Calcutta with the crews. On 22nd September, at 9 P.M., it perpetrated an even more sensational *coup*, steaming up to Madras and shelling the petroleum tanks, which took fire. Two Indians and a boy were killed.

Another German cruiser, *Königsberg*, caught the small British cruiser *Pegasus* at anchor in Zanzibar harbour and, from long range, completely disabled it, killing 25 men and wounding 52 others. On 22nd September, two days later, the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sank the small French gunboat *Zelee*, off the French colony Papeete in the island of Tahiti. The cruisers then bombarded the town, although it is unfortified. All the German cruisers, for the moment, escaped, and the German raid on sixteen British trawlers in the North Sea was equally successful.

On the other hand, the German armed merchant cruiser *Cap Trafalgar* was caught off the east coast of South America by the auxiliary cruiser *Carmania*, and



after an action of an hour and three quarters was sunk. The same fate befell the German merchant ship *Nachtigall*, which tried to ram the aptly-named British gunboat, *Dwarf*, off West Africa; and the cruiser *Cumberland* captured nine liners and a gunboat in the same neighbourhood.

Meanwhile, in spite of the depredations of the *Emden* and the *Königsberg* in the seas between India and Africa, the British fleet was able to convoy the Indian Expeditionary Force in perfect safety across these very waters to Marseilles. Neither could the German cruisers prevent the Australian squadron destroying the German wireless stations at Yap in the Carolines, Nauru in the Gilbert Islands, and Rabaul in New Pomerania. The seas are wide, and it is difficult to run a few cruisers to earth; but the Allied navies were able to detach cruisers to hunt them down, and in the meantime to assure the safety of the vast bulk of its commerce and to go about the tasks it selected as though hostile cruisers did not exist. Up to 16th September 190 German ships had been captured, against twelve captured by the Germans. The Allied navies had also shut up the Austrian fleet in the Adriatic and begun to bombard the naval base, Cattaro.

Of far greater significance than the sporadic appearances of the German corsairs were the operations in the two new fields of naval work: beneath the sea and in the air. Great things had been expected of the German submarines, and during the month of September they did the more damage, though a British under-sea craft distinguished itself by the more daring action. British submarines had already reconnoitred German waters, and if they had done little damage it was because the German vessels protected themselves by lying amid trawlers where they could not be reached. What they could do they did. Time after time a submarine made its way into the Kiel Canal and fired its torpedoes at the locks in the hope of blowing them up. But their position was so precarious that only a second or two could be allowed for sighting, and little success could be expected. On 13th September, Lieutenant-Commander Horton on *Eg*, within six miles of the German coast, sank the cruiser *Hela*. It was little loss in itself, but the moral effect of such an achievement was very great.

A little earlier in the month the *Pathfinder* had been sunk by a German submarine, and on the 22nd the cruisers *Aboukir*, *Cressy*, and *Hogue* were sunk by the same means. The cruisers had been patrolling the North Sea, and between six and seven o'clock in the morning were lying some two miles apart, when it was seen that the *Aboukir* was sinking. The two other cruisers thought she had struck a mine, and stood by to give assistance. It was while the *Hogue* was lowering her launch for this purpose that she herself was struck, and it was then recognised that submarines were at work. This was put beyond doubt immediately by the appearance of a periscope about 300 yards from the *Cressy*. The cruiser at once opened fire and attempted to ram the submarine. It was asserted with the utmost confidence that two of the shots went home and a submarine sank. The *Cressy* was then manœuvred to give assistance to the crews of the *Hogue* and *Aboukir*, and it was while in this position that a periscope was seen again and a torpedo struck the cruiser. Two other torpedoes were seen to be fired, the second passing over the sinking hull of the *Aboukir* before striking the *Cressy*. The *Hogue*, struck second, sank first, turning turtle in about five minutes. The *Aboukir* sank second, and then the *Cressy* heeled over and went down. There was no panic anywhere, and discipline was maintained to the last.

The cruisers were not a great loss to the British navy, but the loss of 60 officers and 1,400 men was undoubtedly a heavy blow. Only 60 officers and 770 men were saved. It was this loss of life which urged the Admiralty to point out that the instinctive promptings of humanity must not in future lead commanders to jeopardise



Air Raids against Germany.

their ships and further lives. If the *Hogue* and *Cressy* had not stood by, many lives would have been saved.

In reporting this action the German Admiralty represented the sinking of the three ships as the work of one submarine; but it is difficult to believe that any submarine at that time built could carry more than three torpedoes, and at least



five were fired. There is the further fact that the gunner of the *Cressy* insisted that he sank one submarine.

In the other new field of naval warfare the British service distinguished itself by equally daring and skilful work. On the same day that the three British cruisers were sunk naval airmen attacked the Zeppelin shed at Düsseldorf. Flight-Lieutenant C. H. Collet, although at once under fire, coolly circled and dropped to a height of about 400 feet before discharging his bombs. Although struck by one projectile he hit the shed, damaged it, and returned safely with his companions. The importance of this incident, according to the official report, was the hint of the possibility of reprisals if the Germans continued their bomb-dropping campaign on Belgian towns. But it was a shrewd stroke for another reason. Zeppelins require sheds for their housing, and by destroying these the possibility of a Zeppelin raid could be ruled out.

An amusing combination of the submarine and air services was illustrated by the arrival of a British submarine at Harwich, with a German naval officer and a mechanic who had been found clinging to the wreckage of an aeroplane in the North Sea.

Another branch of the Naval Flying Corps activity was demonstrated when Commander Samson, on the 16th, with a small armoured motor-car force encountered a patrol of five Uhlans not far from Amiens. He killed four and captured the fifth. Yet another of the new functions of the navy was exemplified when one of the naval airships, the *Gamma*, flew over London during the second week in September. By day and night short cruises were made and valuable information was gleaned as to the vulnerability of the city under the lighting arrangements at that time obtaining.

The activities of the German submarines at length caused the Admiralty to adopt counter-measures, and certain areas were mined. The new mine-field, which was established at the end of September, occupied a rectangle, having its base line from about Ostend across due west to the north of Dover. It, therefore, protected to some extent the Thames mouth and narrowed the entrance to the Straits of Dover. A hint of the development of some such policy had been given when certain channels in the approaches to the Thames had been closed in the third week in September. Incoming and outgoing foreign vessels, or British vessels sailing from and to Colonial ports, were required to take a licensed pilot at certain stations. Other vessels were required to consult the nearest Customs authorities as to the channels available.

The 1907 Hague Convention, as we have seen, left the practice of mine-laying solely at the discretion and humanity of the minelayers. The opposition of Germany to any further restriction had prevented any agreement, and, in the last resort, the observance of the provisions of international laws and conventions must depend upon a nation's honour or the power of other nations to enforce it. An instance of the operation of the latter factor was provided in the last week of September, when Austrian mines in the Adriatic destroyed several Italian fishing-boats. Austria could not afford to have trouble with Italy, and consequently met the Italian representations in a conciliatory spirit and offered compensation.

While these events were happening on the seas, engagements were taking place on land in various parts of the world. The Continent of Africa, containing so many footholds of the belligerent nations, was inevitably the scene of numerous small

engagements. In spite of some minor successes the advantage lay with the Allies. The Union of South Africa undertook operations against German South-West Africa, and in the third week of September occupied the port of Lüderitzbucht. The town was surrendered without opposition, the German garrison having retreated inland after blowing up the railway. As a retaliation a German patrol raided the British station to the north at Walfish Bay. Neither operation was, in itself, of any great importance; but the movement against German South-West Africa was to have momentous and tragic consequences for the Union of South Africa, by providing certain disaffected elements with a reason for rebellion.

Namaqualand, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and British East Africa were all the scene of German raids, in spite of the fact that the Germans maintained the fate of these Colonies would be determined in Europe. In Rhodesia, Namaqualand, and Nyasaland the Germans were put to flight after one or two skirmishes. They were driven over the borders in Rhodesia, and, after heavy fighting, in Nyasaland; in Namaqualand the invading force was compelled to surrender. The operations in the East Africa Protectorate were more protracted, and at the end of the month a small frontier station was still held by the enemy, though all the other raiding parties had been repulsed and driven over the borders. An early attempt to blow up the Uganda railway was defeated, and the dynamite and outfit was captured. On 6th September a strong force of the enemy was severely handled and repulsed in the Tsavo region by the British force, which included Indian troops. Later in the month a force of about 400, of which about 50 were Europeans, made a more formidable attempt at invasion, and at first the British were forced to retire. In a few days, however, the Germans themselves evacuated the towns they had occupied. Further skirmishes took place, and on the 25th, 30 of the East African Mounted Rifles engaged a German force of 35 with 150 natives, and after an hour's engagement put them to flight. The following day the fighting had again flowed to the region about the Tsavo River, where a strong force of the enemy with six maxim guns was repulsed and forced to retire.

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In the East, German colonies were changing hands. By the end of August, German Samoa had been seized by an Expeditionary Force from New Zealand, which was convoyed by French warships and ships of the Australian navy. On 11th September the Australian squadron took possession of Herbertshohe, on Neu Pommern, the capital of the German possessions in New Guinea, the defenders after a sharp engagement surrendering. A fortnight later Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, the capital of Kaiser Wilhelm's land, German New Guinea, was taken by the same squadron. There was no opposition, the resistance at Herbertshohe having been crushed it was apparently thought useless to hold out further.

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Meanwhile the siege of Tsingtau was proceeding methodically. The Japanese not being pressed for time did not take risks or hurry the matter. Mines were cleared from the German waters to allow of the more intimate co-operation of the navy. The German ships inside the harbour had to be rendered useless, as they were able to prove a severe menace to the troops operating against the fortress. Towards the end of September these were increased by the landing near Laoshan Bay of a British force, under Brigadier-General Barnardiston. A Japanese force, which later occupied Laoshan harbour, captured four field guns abandoned by the Germans.



Aeroplanes made their appearance even in these operations. Three Japanese aeroplanes, although under a rain of bullets, threw bombs on the German ships within the harbour and returned safely. A German aeroplane tried unsuccessfully to repeat the operation. It was at once pursued by a Japanese aeroplane, which succeeded in throwing bombs on a captive balloon, though it could not capture the German raider. During all this time the troops were under the fire of the forts and the ships ; but however gallant the resistance offered, the fate of Germany's Eastern possessions was sealed from the beginning. The Kaiser had ordered Tsingtau to hold out to the last, and the order was fulfilled.

## XV. THE BATTLES FOR THE FLANK.

### ARRAS—THE YSER—THE LYS —YPRES.

THE fall of Antwerp saw the Western battlefield in a strange condition. We have seen already how, as soon as he appreciated the approach of stability on the Aisne, Joffre began to reorganise his battle line and build up new armies on the flank of the Germans. Maunoury extended his line to Lassigny. Castelnau was called from Lorraine to take charge of a new 7th Army to the north about 20th September, and before the end of the month Maud'huy extended the line towards the La Bassée Canal with the 10th Army. Neither of the belligerents had as yet a correct appreciation of the other's strength. The Allied effort was directed against the German main communications, the object being to envelop some part of the German army or to drive it out of France. The Germans, on the other hand, who, in the next month, increased their strength by a third, were endeavouring to avoid a prolonged warfare of positions and still hoped to resume their advance.

As the days crept by and Joffre articulated his armies to the north, the aims of both belligerents had to be modified ; and out of this struggle of cross-purposes there at length remained but the passionate, almost desperate, determination to seize the whole of the Channel coast and the fixed resolve to defend it. With the Channel coast in their hands the Germans would have had a mortgage on British sea power. They intended to install long-range guns on the French coast ; and, with the experiences of the spring of 1918 in our memory, we can imagine what this would have meant. The British communications with France would have been hazardous, and the Germans would have had many excellent bases for naval operations against the Channel and cross-Channel traffic, and a good assembling ground for an invading force.

This, however, was not to be. As the French armies grew to the northward, each of them went through a similar rhythm. They marched eastward skilfully and resolutely, met the enemy and gradually established a sort of equilibrium. At the beginning of the second week of October Maud'huy lay east of Douai and Lens, and had a Territorial force in Lille. The British armies were moving northwards, and in a few days the 2nd Corps was facing eastward towards Lille. By this time the Belgians were falling back towards the Yser and the British 4th Corps was retiring north of Ypres.

In the third week the Belgians had reached the Yser, and from the sea the line was intact. The Germans quickly saw that their chances were fading away, and



The Building-up of the Allies' Left Flank.



struck north against the Belgians and south against Maud'huy, in the direction of Arras. The latter brought the attack to a standstill, and the Belgians, aided by naval units and by the watery foreground they had flooded, were at length so firmly established that they could no longer be usefully attacked.

There remained the British front, newly formed about Ypres. On this area the most terrible battle ever experienced to that date by British arms developed, reached a crisis when it seemed that all was lost, died down, came to another crisis under the stimulus of the Prussian Guard, and then died down for the winter. At Mons little more than one corps was attacked at one time, and then for only a few hours. At Le Cateau the desperate struggle involved only three divisions. On the



The Rival Plans.

Marne no pitched battle was fought. At the Aisne a greater number of troops were engaged than in any of the preceding engagements; but the struggle never reached a pitch of desperation and only lasted from ten days to a fortnight. But at Ypres the battle was *à outrance*. No ground could be given; and, against almost overwhelming odds, in men and artillery, the weary, dauntless men fought for nearly a month. Unshaven, gaunt, and worn they were at the end, but triumphant in their victory.

As the Battle of the Aisne continued the Germans were, like the Allies, reorganising their battle line. The army of the Duke of Wurtemberg disappeared from the line to appear later against the British. The Bavarian army from Lorraine operated

to the south against Maud'huy. General von Stranz had been placed in charge of an army detachment in Lorraine. Below the Bavarian army, against Castelnau, Bülow's army was operating. Hausen had disappeared for ever, and the German centre was held by a reserve army under General von Einem, who had charge of the 7th Corps troops in the operations in Belgium, and Heeringen, from Alsace. Heeringen was on the left of Kluck. With General von Beseler from Antwerp operating against the Belgians, the new German organisation came to the mighty struggle at Ypres. We can best follow these operations by dealing first with the blow at Arras, then the Belgian resistance on the Yser, leaving the British movements culminating in Ypres to the last. This order is more logical than chronological, but it helps to make a tangled story clearer.

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**Arras.**—We have already seen how Joffre, during the first days of the Battle of the Aisne, began to extend his flank northwards. On 11th September Maunoury was ordered to occupy the right bank of the Oise, and four days later he received an additional army corps to help the extension of his left wing. On the 20th Castelnau, with the Lorraine operations carried to a successful issue, was able to take charge of the three divisions which were the first nucleus of the 7th Army. The French were at the moment a little in advance of the Germans, despite the superiority of the communications enjoyed by the latter. The mobility of the French was from the first remarkable; and this new reorganisation, built up by the help of railways, motor lorries, and omnibuses, was but one of the great achievements of the Staff.

On the 21st Castelnau passed Noyon and moved towards the German communications through St. Quentin. The troops soon came into contact with a heavier German concentration, and in a week were compelled to fall back to Ribecourt. Their left flank was continued north from Albert by a group of Territorial divisions under General Brugère. About Roye and Albert the last days of the month saw desperate struggles between the two armies. But by this time Maud'huy's army was in place to the north. The attempt to move eastward against the German communications now devolved upon the 10th Army, since Castelnau found himself firmly held on the left, and only with difficulty holding his own against the fierce onslaughts towards Albert.

Maud'huy's right lay on the Ancre. His left was crossing the Franco-Belgian frontier and reconnoitring towards the Yser. In this area the cavalry came into touch with Marwitz's Uhlans, who had already left their mark upon people's imaginations. One of his Territorial divisions held Lille, and another had a brief hold on Douai. Arras had been evacuated in front of him; but before he could take secure possession of Douai the Territorials were flung out of it and he found himself involved in a struggle north of the Scarpe. The German 6th Army was encountered, and on 4th October Maud'huy retired upon Arras, where the troops had to sustain a fierce bombardment which was followed by a prolonged attack.

It was on this day that General Foch was summoned to take over the direction of the northern group of armies under Castelnau and Maud'huy with Brugère's group and Conneau's cavalry; and it is characteristic of him that, starting on the moment he received the order, he roused Castelnau from his bed at four o'clock in the morning to discuss the situation. Five hours later the two were at Maud'huy's headquarters at Aubigny. The British were moving northward, and Foch had to fit them, with the Antwerp relief troops then moving to Belgium, into his plans.



The day after this consultation General Sir Henry Rawlinson, who later in the war commanded armies in many battles which must live in history, visited Antwerp. He was the commander of the 4th Army Corps, whose rôle was to join up with the other British troops in their flank movement and link them with the Belgian army, or to cover its retreat from the city, if the fortress could not be held. The following day the 7th Division, one of the most famous in the British army, began to land at Zeebrugge and Ostend, and on the 8th the 3rd Cavalry Division, commanded by another general who was to leave his mark on history, the Hon. Sir Julian Byng, landed at Ostend. On the next day Antwerp fell, and this small force, with its roving commission in Belgium, had to look to itself. In a few days the outlines of a front prolonging Maud'huy's line to the coast began to appear, and it was presumably this prospect which led the Germans to attack in force towards Arras. General von Falkenhayn was now in charge. Moltke had failed in the opening moves and Falkenhayn was appointed to save something from the wreck. He had been Minister of War, and for some time he brought the Germans successes, but his command did not survive the holocaust of Verdun.

Arras was of great importance as a centre of communications. It was of still greater importance as opening up the roads which led to the rear of the positions upon which the Belgians and British were then forming. The Allied line was complete between the coast and Belfort when the Germans, abandoning their assault against Maud'huy's left about Lens, moved in force against his centre at Arras. The battle began on 20th October, when the struggle on the Yser had been raging two days and the opposed armies were in conflict over the whole northern sector.

About the city the battle ebbed and flowed. The French held an arc of high ground round it, but they were unable to do more than hold their own as the struggle came to a crisis. On the 24th, despite the fierce attacks of the Prussian Guard, the French held firm, and on the following days, the attack being spent, began to recoil. Little by little the Germans were pushed back until Arras, once more out of easy range of the hostile guns, began to live again.

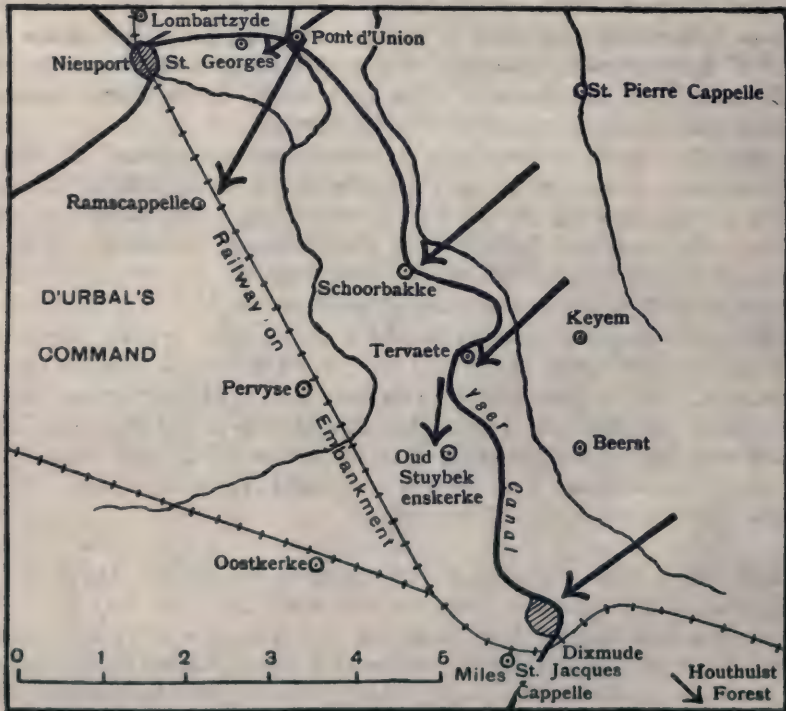
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**The Yser.**—Meanwhile the struggle was raging to the north. On 16th October the Belgians lay in a rough curve from the Houthulst Forest to the coast. The following day they were pushed back from the woods by one fierce blow, and there began a fierce struggle for the Yser. On the 18th, when the battle opened, a novel diversion was made from the sea, where Admiral Hood, with the monitors, *Humber*, *Severn*, and *Mersey*, acted as a flank guard to the weak and weary Belgian force. It was also assisted by a strong force of marines under Admiral Ronarch. On this first day the Belgians realised the critical nature of the struggle which confronted them. They were driven back on the left and right and in the centre; and, though they prevented the development of these successes, they began to contract and reinforce their line.

The following day, despite a fierce Franco-Belgian counter-attack and increased assistance from the sea, the Allies lost Keyern and Beerst, and were weakening at Lombartzyde, which at length fell after a desperate struggle for thirteen hours. Dixmude and the Yser bridgehead, which it formed, was in flames, and was only held by the most gallant resolution of the Belgians with the French Marines. A further limitation of the Belgian front became necessary, and its eastern flank now rested upon St. Jacques-Cappelle, the extent of the line being about twelve miles.

French troops covered their right. The German bombardment was now overwhelming the Belgians. But despite the ordeal the men still clung to Nieuport and Dixmude. They were in desperate straits and could not see how they could stem the German tide. Foch called upon the Belgian command and suggested that the line of the railway from Nieuport to Dixmude might be held *if there were a little water* to strengthen it. The suggestion bore fruit later in the flooding of this area.

It was at this point the Germans transferred their attention to the bend of the Yser at Tervaele, and on the 22nd they captured the footbridge east of the village, and got across the river. For a little the position was grave; but a gallant counter-attack prevented the Germans from taking the rest of the line in flank and flung



The Battle of the Yser.

them back to the river. Every precaution had now to be taken lest the position, already critical, should get out of hand by some sudden stroke, and the Belgians accordingly fired the stacks in the fields, which threw a vivid light over the battleground all night. The next day another bridgehead was lost, and as the Germans were rapidly establishing themselves across the river, the Belgians were ordered to defend the chord across the bend at all costs.

At Nieuport the troops were almost at the end of their strength, and French reinforcements, now available, were thrown in there, and the Belgians were withdrawn. French assistance was also asked for and given at the bend of the river. Pont de l'Union fell, and the Germans crossed the river in force, captured St. Georges, and established themselves between that village and Oud Stuyvekenskerke. The latter



village was recaptured in a spirited counter-attack, but St. Georges remained in German hands.

The troops had been compelled to withstand a succession of furious onslaughts, and although their flank continued to be protected by the cross fire of the British 12-inch guns from Admiral Hood's flotilla, the line wavered and gave in an ominous manner. To the terrible fire from the ships the Germans could make no suitable reply. By means of searchlights the ships blazed away at night as well as in the day time, and the fire was observed and directed from observation balloons. Some little damage, indeed, the German guns did effect; but the casualties were few. German submarines came up, but were kept off by the skilful manœuvring of torpedo boats, one of which rammed a German underwater craft. In the face of such a handicap the Germans had naturally thrown their greatest force against the sector farther inland. So violent had been the fighting in this area that the Belgians admitted losing some 10,000 dead and wounded during the preceding nine days.

Foch's suggestion about the water protection had now borne fruit. The Belgians had remembered the plans for flooding Flanders, and with the help of the sappers set to work to carry it out. On the 26th the troops fell back to the railway, where they stood despite the continued attacks. The 42nd French Division and some French Territorial regiments assisted them, and the Germans paused for two days. On the 27th, when a violent attack was made against the centre, a new factor had to be taken into account. The foreground was flooded.

But the enemy continued to throw fresh troops into this quarter of the field, and brought up heavy siege guns and aeroplanes to keep off the naval flotilla. Of all the fierce attacks to which the Belgian troops had been subjected since the siege of Liège this was the most terrible. There is incident enough in the fighting between Nieupoort and Dixmude to deserve a history of its own. Frequently the line was held by the bayonet alone. Novel expedients were invented by the Germans to gain their way. Machine guns mounted in motor boats appeared on the waters, but were put out of action by the artillery. A similar fate befell a bridge built upon boats which confronted the startled Belgians in the half-light of early morning. Some of the Germans had crossed, and they fought with extraordinary bravery. Many were killed, and the few remaining surrendered. At times night attacks were made by forces crossing upon rafts.

The Kaiser had just arrived at Thielt to be present at the decisive attack on Ypres; but this assault afforded him no pleasure. On the following day, one of the critical days at Ypres, the Germans reached the railway at Ramscapelle, but were held to the village.

On 1st November they retired. The flooding of the ground reduced it to thick mud which gradually became a big lake. The battle ended with the production of this defence, and the struggle for the coastal flank of the Allied armies had been conducted by General d'Urbal, despite the heaviest odds, to a successful conclusion.

The heroism of the Belgian troops about Dixmude was fittingly recognised by the presentation to General Meiser, who had been present at the defence of Liège, of the Commandership of the Legion of Honour. The particular action for which he was decorated was the repulsing of repeated attacks of the utmost violence on Dixmude. In twenty-four hours these amounted, it was computed, to fifteen.

## XVI. THE BATTLE OF YPRES.

"No more arduous task has ever been assigned to British soldiers; and in all their splendid history there is no instance of their having answered so magnificently to the desperate calls which of necessity were made upon them."—[Sir John French's dispatch.]

It is necessary to go back a little to trace the roots of the Battle of Ypres in the conflict on the Aisne.

The operations necessary for the removal of about 150,000 men with all their material from the firing line on the Aisne involved many delicate adjustments. The troops lay on a slope down which they had to march, then cross a bridge and mount another slope.

On 3rd October General Gough's 2nd Cavalry Division marched for Compiègne *en route* for the new theatre, and on 19th October the last detail completed its detrainment at St. Omer. The relief was carried out at the dead of night, the men marching in silence until well beyond earshot, when they were allowed to talk. Then a further space of marching, and they were placed in the train *en route* for Paris or Amiens. They did not stop in the capital, but were carried north to St. Omer. As they left the trenches tired and sleepy, French soldiers from the neighbouring armies took their place to hold watch and ward over the enemy until the time came when a general advance could be made. The withdrawal was made under anxious conditions. On the evening of 3rd October the Germans conducted a heavy bombardment of the British lines. The same thing occurred on the 6th and 8th, and it was a very ordinary practice to fire a number of rounds at night. A withdrawal in such difficult country, while shells were falling in one's midst, cannot have been an easy still less a comfortable operation.

There were many reasons for the withdrawal of the British troops to the north. In the first place, their line of communications would be much simplified, and reinforcements could be sent to them more expeditiously. Sir John French doubtless had in mind another factor. He knew early in October of the dispatch of the 4th Corps to Belgium to attempt the relief of Antwerp. If he could transfer his troops to the north rapidly, and if Antwerp could still hold out, he could join with the 4th Corps in a wide sweeping movement across Belgium and automatically relieve the besieged fortress. The plan was an attractive one, but, as we have seen already, it was foredoomed to failure. A fortnight earlier might have made all the difference.

On the 8th October, Sir John French visited the headquarters of General Foch at Doullens, and a general scheme of combined operations was drawn up. The Bethune-Lille road was to be the dividing line between the 10th French Army and the British forces, and the latter were to be used first on the French left to attack in flank the Germans engaged at that point. After this and other minor sweeping operations the Anglo-French line was to move forward in an easterly direction.

The 2nd Army Corps came into position on 11th October, on the Aire-Bethune Canal, which faces north-east at an angle of about thirty degrees from Bethune. It was to pivot on Bethune and march due east to the line Laventie-Lorgies, which would place it in a position to be a direct threat to the German flank. The ground in this district is probably the most difficult fighting ground to be found anywhere. Lille is called with some force the Manchester of France, and the country resembles



the south of Lancashire. Generally flat and cut across by dykes, the ground is dotted about with factories, chimneys, and shaft workings. Bad country for artillery at any time, it became worse now owing to the rain and fog.

The 2nd Army Corps began the movements planned for it, General Gough's cavalry working on its left and clearing the Germans out of the woods to the north. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien found his advance heavily contested. He was operating on an extended line, and this in such difficult country made his progress slower. For some days he fought his way eastward, his intention being to fall on the German flank and rear from the La Bassée-Lille road about Fournes. On La Bassée neither French nor British could make any impression. It was well defended from high ground to the south and resisted all attacks for four years.

On the 12th the 3rd Corps had arrived in the north and lay at Hazebrouck. Between them and the 2nd Corps General Conneau's cavalry corps was operating, and to the north and east lay the British cavalry corps. The immediate rôle of the 3rd Corps was to move eastward to the line Armentières-Wyschaete. On the 14th it had pushed the Germans out of Metteren and occupied Bailleul, which they had evacuated. The high ground to the north and north-west was cleared by the cavalry corps after severe fighting. The cavalry were now given the difficult rôle of reconnoitring the line of the Lys. This they did in spite of heavy opposition, but they were unable to secure a permanent footing on the east bank. By the evening of the 15th the 3rd Corps held the line of the Lys from Armentières to Saily after an advance against persistent resistance. The 2nd Corps lay to the south about Croix Barbée, having cleared the road which runs from the eastern bank of the Lys, below Saily, to La Bassée. The British force had swept a considerable tract of country and driven the Germans to the east.

On the 16th the 2nd Corps had taken up an advanced position on a line stretching between the villages Aubers and Herlies; General Pulteney with the 3rd Corps lay along the Lys from Armentières to Saily. Between the two British corps were the French cavalry, and the British cavalry lay to the north of Armentières. The line this day was continued north to Langemarck by the falling back of the 4th Corps.

Capper's 7th Division and Byng's 3rd Cavalry Division had joined hands at Roulers on the 13th, and the little force, at first lying between Zandvoorde and Langemarck, acted as flank guard to the British troops farther south.

The previous day the German force from before Antwerp had advanced from Bruges and occupied Ostend, and the Belgian army, falling back before the enemy, took up a position on the left of the British to the sea.

Two days later the 4th Corps was ordered to take Menin, and at the same time the cavalry on its right and the 3rd Corps were ordered to advance. The 3rd Corps at this moment held a line from Le Gheir, on the Lys above Armentières, to Radinghem. It was a long and difficult line to hold as the Germans lay in at least double the numbers through Radinghem, Perenchies, Frelinghem, and up the Lys to Wervicq. The 3rd Corps was ordered to move up the Lys to assist the cavalry corps to seize the opposite bank. This would materially have assisted the 4th Corps to take Menin; but to accomplish it the 3rd Corps must first drive the Germans towards Lille, and, in view of the heavy reinforcements, this was found to be impossible. The 2nd Corps, which had taken Aubers and Herlies at the point of the bayonet on the previous day, felt the augmented pressure so keenly that it was resolved to fall back on a stronger line.

The troops could not make any headway against the Germans who held the Armentières-Lille road in force. They were therefore unable to move up the Lys to help the cavalry corps, and the latter could not carry the line of the river. The 4th Corps, exhausted and weakened by continual marching and fighting, were not committed to an attack upon Menin, and on the 20th they had fallen back upon their old line from Zandvoorde to the Ypres-Menin road at Gheluvelt and thence to Zonnebeke. The British operations already began to bear the appearance of a defensive, despite the sanguine hopes of Foch and French.

On the 19th the last details of the British army had detrained at St. Omer and were concentrated between there and Hazebrouck. Sir John French had now to decide what use he should make of Sir Douglas Haig's troops. At that moment the four army corps were holding a line of about twenty-six miles against a constantly increasing enemy. It was much too long for safety, and ordinary counsels of prudence suggested that the 1st Army Corps should be used to strengthen the line. But against such a decision Sir John had to weigh the fact that if he so disposed his troops the country north and east of Ypres and the Ypres Canal would be left open to a wide turning movement. Considerable German forces were marching from the east at this very moment. There were available against them two or three French cavalry divisions, some French Territorial troops, and the Belgian army. The recent experiences of the heroic Belgian army had left it in no condition to resist an attack of such dimensions, and as we have seen, they had to limit their operations more and more as the battle wore on. They had entrenched themselves on the Ypres Canal and Yser River, had repulsed several attempts to force the line of the Yser, and were capable, in spite of weariness and exhaustion, of holding their line in presence of substantial help. But to leave them strung out on a broad front, Sir John felt would be as fatal as unfair. If the Germans could turn the Allied line in this direction they would have the Channel ports at their mercy.

Moved by such considerations, Sir John determined to use the 1st Corps to the north of the 4th, leaving his small army to hold the long line until relief could be obtained. Sir Douglas Haig was to advance through Ypres towards Thorout, to capture Bruges if possible, and to drive the Germans towards Ghent. A plan of such ambitious dimensions rings oddly in the ears in view of the actual occurrences. But Sir John French had misconceived the nature of the resistance the 1st Corps would have to overcome in such an undertaking. The plan had been concerted with Foch; but the latter had hoped the British would be concentrated in the north much earlier than in fact they were. At this moment five fresh German corps were bearing down upon them. Indeed the defence of such a line as that of the British in this neighbourhood was itself almost impossible against the German forces which were called up to break through. It was a great risk; but unless some attempt were made disaster might fall upon the Allied line.

"I fully realised," says Sir John French, "the difficult task which lay before us, and the onerous rôle which the British army was called upon to fulfil.

"That success has been attained, and all the enemy's desperate attempts to break through our lines frustrated, is due entirely to the marvellous fighting power and the indomitable courage and tenacity of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men."

On the 20th the 1st Corps were moving up towards Zonnebeke. The whole line from the coast to La Bassée was at this time subjected to a heavy assault and to a



constant rain of shrapnel and heavy shells. The following day the 1st Corps was ordered to attack and take the line Poelcappelle-Passchendaele, to the north-east of Langemarck and Zonnebeke. On their left were de Mitry's French cavalry and French Territorials, and on their right the 4th Corps. But little progress was made. The gallant 7th Division found its advance checked by very fierce resistance, and had to be supported by the 1st Corps. To add to the difficulties of Sir Douglas Haig, the French cavalry, early in the afternoon, were ordered to retire. The 1st Gloucesters and Coldstreams, thrown forward to fill the gap, were driven back. The British northern flank was thus uncovered, and owing to this fact and the most formidable attacks on the 4th Corps the line could not be carried as far forward as Sir John French had directed.

From this time up to 31st October the whole line, from the coast to La Bassée, was subjected to constant attacks which seemed to grow in violence, working up to a grand finale on the last day of the month, when the position of the British about Ypres became critical.

The 7th Division, on the 21st, was holding a sort of right-angled triangle with the apex at Becelaere, and the Germans opened a very terrible fire on the side facing north, which was held by Lawford's 22nd Brigade. Later in the day Watt's 21st Brigade at the apex was heavily assaulted, and some of the assailants got through into Polygon Wood. They remained behind the 2nd Yorks for two days, forcing the men to fight in opposite directions.

Sir John French, in view of the increasing numbers being thrown against the northern part of his line, counselled Sir Douglas Haig and Sir Henry Rawlinson to play a strictly defensive rôle, holding the ground they had gained. This course had already been enjoined upon the 2nd, 3rd, and Cavalry Corps to the south. French reinforcements were expected by the 24th, and it was then hoped to drive the Germans back by a concerted attack. On 22nd October renewed attacks along the line of the 1st Corps were beaten off. During the night there were five onslaughts on the British lines by one of the new German formations. They came on, these young men, half-trained but full of courage, singing "Die Wacht am Rhein," and their fate is the answer to the many pacific theorists who believe soldiers can be made in a day.

"The enemy advanced with great determination, but with little skill," says Sir John French. "The way their advance was conducted," "Eye-witness" records, "showed a lack of training and faults in leading which the almost superhuman bravery of the soldiers could not counter-balance. It was a holocaust." The British waited until the enemy were quite close, and then met them with a deadly fire from rifles and maxims. As the shaken and broken ranks fell back field guns and howitzers poured shot into them. Taking refuge in houses and villages, they were driven forth by heavy shell. When they emerged more shrapnel met them. During the 23rd, 600 prisoners were taken, and 1,500 dead were left on the field. Letters found on a captive officer later stated that the effectives of the corps were reduced on that day to 25 per cent.

A similar holocaust took place on the southern part of the British line on the 21st. South-east of Armentières alone the German casualties were estimated at over 6,000. Farther to the north the fiercest fighting circled round Le Gheir. This village, which lies on the western bank of the Lys, had been taken by the British on the 17th; but advancing in force on the 20th after dusk, the Germans, after heavy

fighting, had succeeded in capturing it by the morning. A strong counter-attack was organised, and the village was once more in British hands. Here, too, the German casualties were extremely heavy. The men marched forward in the most intrepid manner only to be swept away by the deadly British fire. Two hundred prisoners were taken and 40 British soldiers in German hands were released. They had been very well treated by the Saxon troops, who had placed them in cellars as a protection against the British bombardment.

A new feature in the fighting about this time was the co-operation of the Indian troops for the first time on European soil. To have brought over these native troops with so many distinguished Indians was an experiment characteristic of the British Empire to-day. That there are abuses in British colonial administration no one in possession of the facts will deny. It is difficult to see how there should not be when one body of men arrogates to itself the claim and exacts the deference belonging to a superior race. That, on the whole, it is much better than it would be at present under the native rulers probably few thoughtful people would deny; and its general success is shown by the eagerness on the part of princes and people to take an actual part in the Empire's struggles in Europe.

With the Indian contingents serving in France there were present Sir Pratap Singh Bahadur; the Maharaja-Regent of Jodhpur; the Maharaja of Jodhpur; Sir Ganga Singh Bahadur; the Maharaja of Bikanir; Sir Madan Singh Bahadur; Maharaja-Dhiraj of Kishengarh; the Honourable Malik Umar Hayat Khan, Tuvana; Raj-Kumar Hira Singh of Panna; Maharaja-Kumar Hitendra Narayan of Cooch Behar; Lieutenant Malik Mumtaz Mahomed Khan, Native Indian Land Forces; Resaldar Khwaja Mahomed Khan Bahadur, Queen Victoria's Own Corps of Guides; and Captain Shah Mirza Beg.

The Indian troops had been allowed a little space to become acclimatised to their new conditions, but on the 19th and 20th October they were concentrated in the rear of the 2nd Corps. On the 22nd they were moved up to the support of the cavalry corps, in which position they performed "excellent work." They at once impressed the Commander-in-Chief by their initiative and resource, and their many novel ruses to deceive the enemy, kept much superior forces at bay.

The British were relieved by the arrival of French reinforcements on the day on which Joffre had promised them. French Territorials under Mitry took over the line held by the 1st Division, and a division of the 9th Corps, which had borne so much strain in the Battle of Fère-Champenoise, allowed the 2nd Division to shorten its front. On the 25th the 2nd Division, with the assistance of Dubois' troops on the left, advanced towards the north-east and gained some ground. A number of guns were also taken and about 280 prisoners. In the centre below Ypres the fighting was very severe. The 2nd Scots Guards had to give way before the Saxon onslaught, but they recovered their position in a counter-attack. Two days later Sir John French made a new disposition in his commands by amalgamating the 4th Corps, now so seriously weakened, with the 1st.

The heaviest attacks upon the British section of the line in the north began on the 29th, the day upon which French was substituting the Indian troops for Smith-Dorrien's corps in the south. The troops, at this time, still held a salient in advance of Ypres with the apex about Becelaere. But the north and south sides had been driven in somewhat, and these were the chief objects of attack. Along the whole line the enemy threw itself with extreme violence. At Kruiyseik the first attacks





bardment. The situation was now so dangerous that Sir Douglas Haig ordered the line from Gheluvelt to the corner of the canal to be held at all costs. The division stood firm and the line was held, though the casualties were heavy. Farther south the 3rd Corps was holding up against heavy odds.

A little south of Ypres the line was at that moment pierced, but a skilful and gallant attack by the Somerset Light Infantry restored it. The corps had persistently clung to its long line of from twelve to thirteen miles, and was still as determined and obstinate as ever. The cavalry corps was beset at Hollebeke and Messines. It had been called upon to fulfil a difficult rôle and had suffered heavy loss. It withstood the shock, but could not hold out much longer against the heavy odds, and hence reinforcements were sent to them. These consisted of part of the 2nd Corps, the bulk of whose line was now being held by Indian troops, and a London Scottish Territorial battalion. This was the first time British Territorial troops had been in action. The cavalry corps, thus reinforced, alone kept at bay for two days two fresh German corps.

An order taken from a prisoner purported to be from General von Deimling, commander of the 15th Corps, and saying that this corps, with some Bavarian corps, were entrusted with the breaking through to Ypres. It further said that the Kaiser himself considered the success of the attack on this point to be of vital importance to the war. The redoubtable Bavarians had been stimulated by their Crown Prince, who conveyed to them the information that the English were their chief enemy and they were now to have an opportunity to express their hatred in suitable terms.

As a matter of fact the hottest fighting on this day took place in the southern section of the line, and it was here where the Territorials were stationed. Sir John French, surveying their services and those of the other Territorial troops after the stress of many days of furious battle, said: "The conduct and bearing of these units under fire, and the efficient manner in which they carried out the various duties assigned to them, have imbued me with the highest hope as to the value and help of Territorial troops generally." Sir Douglas Haig also spoke "in high terms of their conduct in the field and the value of their support." This is very high praise, and without a doubt it was well merited.

But the day had been critical, and French had had to accept the help of eight battalions from Foch. These were the only reserves on the northern front, and Foch had offered them to French on hearing how the southern sector of his line had fared.

But worse was to come. The crisis of the operations for the capture of Ypres occurred on 31st October. The attacks had been steadily working up in violence, and on this day there were moments when it seemed that numbers and weight of artillery must tell. French troops had come to reinforce the British line south of Ypres after the furious onslaught of the previous evening, and in the morning they moved out boldly to counter-attack. But they were brought to a standstill. It was impossible to advance. Only their gallantry and determination kept them from falling back and breaking. Along the Ypres-Menin road the day began with a violent series of attacks and counter-attacks. The lines swayed backward and forward. After this had gone on for some time the main attack was suddenly thrown upon Gheluvelt. The village lies upon the Ypres-Menin road, not quite five miles from Ypres. The attack was delivered with such violence that the 1st Division, overcome by sheer "weight of numbers and metal," broke and fell back.



Meanwhile the 7th Division, lying to the south of the road, had been under a heavy bombardment for some hours. The 1st Division, falling back, left their northern flank unsupported, and the Royal Scots Fusiliers, stubbornly holding on to their trenches, were surrounded. To add to the confusion and horror of the moment



Fighting at Gheluvelt on 31st October. The critical moment.

the enemy's artillery began to hurl a rain of shell upon the headquarters of the 1st and 2nd Divisions. The general in command of the 1st Division (Lomax) was wounded, and General Landon had to assume command. The general commanding the 2nd Division (Munro) also received a shaking and was unconscious for some time, and six Staff officers—three of each division—were killed.

The retirement of the 7th Division exposed the flank of Bulfin's 2nd Brigade, and this retiring left the flank of de Moussy's French troops open. Allenby's cavalry corps held up against fearful odds. But the situation seemed beyond hope. A touch and the whole Ypres position would fall in pieces.

At 2.30 Sir Douglas Haig was informed that the 1st Division was falling back and the enemy were advancing in force. The crisis of the whole of this great battle had arrived. Sir John French was with Sir Douglas Haig at the time. Sir Douglas issued orders at once that a line stretching from Frezenberg, north-east of Ypres, to the bend of the Ypres-Menin road, over the Klein Zillebeke height to the bend of the canal, must be held at all costs. This line was about two miles nearer to Ypres, and unless it could be held, disaster must fall upon the British troops; Ypres would be in the hands of the enemy, and the way to the Channel coast would lie open.

It is interesting and inspiring to note that the 1st Division had rallied some time before this order reached them. East of the bend of the road there is some wooded country, and on the line of the woods the division re-formed, and the Germans advancing up the road were met with a deadly fire. The left of the division with the right of the 2nd Division then delivered a counter-attack upon the right of the German line in the Menin road, which was pressed with such force that the Germans were thrown back past Gheluvelt. By the time Sir Douglas Haig's order had arrived the village was once more in British hands. The recapture of the village is to be attributed chiefly to the splendid gallantry of the 2nd Worcester Regiment and the 42nd Brigade Royal Field Artillery; and it was Brigadier-General (1st Brigade) C. Fitzclarence, V.C., who saw his chance and gave the order which initiated the counter-attack. This gallant officer lost his life in attempting to carry out another counter-attack later in the battle.

Meanwhile the 7th Division was endeavouring to recover from the shock of finding its right uncovered in a moment. The violent attack in this quarter had caused the 22nd Brigade to fall back. In so doing it exposed Bulfin's 2nd Brigade. The general commanding the division at once advanced his reserve to restore the line. But in the meantime the 2nd Brigade had fallen back. The result was that the right of the division was advancing when the left of the 2nd Brigade had fallen back. But they held their ground in this exposed position till nightfall. The left of the division, on the recapture of Gheluvelt once more advanced, and succeeded in gaining almost the old line. Two regiments of the 6th Cavalry Brigade were now sent to clear the woods lying to the south-east and to close the gap which still lay between Bulfin's 2nd Brigade and the 7th Division. "They advanced with much dash, partly mounted and partly dismounted; and, surprising the enemy in the woods, succeeded in killing large numbers and materially helped to restore the line." By 10 P.M. the 7th Division had retaken practically its old line, and the gap between its right and the 2nd Brigade existed no longer.

In this most severe and critical struggle for the possession of Ypres the British had again won. The losses had been heavy, but it was quite clear that the losses of the enemy were heavier. The Germans had been using a vast number of motor omnibuses behind their front to transfer troops from one part of the field to another. These tactics multiplied their forces considerably; but the numbers unhappily but swelled the vast number of lives that were being thrown away in a mad attempt to achieve a decisive victory.

At the end of this day it seemed impossible that the troops could hold the line



any longer, and French was planning to retire.\* He was dissuaded by Foch, who sent him considerable reinforcements. The conversation was after this fashion :—French : “ Well, then, there’s nothing to do but die.” Foch : “ Stand firm first. We can die afterwards.” The 16th Corps, under the huge Grossetti, relieved part of Allenby’s corps, and Conneau’s cavalry also came north.

The following day Hollebeke and Messines were taken in the morning by the Germans, but a fierce counter-attack recovered the former. These two villages lie south of Ypres almost the same distance from the Lys as Gheluvelt from Menin ; but their position on a ridge, which formed the scene of a great battle in 1917, gave them a value out of all proportion to their size. The 3rd Cavalry Corps had been pressed back this distance by the fierce onslaughts of the enemy. Hardly a day passed during the next fortnight without some attempt on one section of the line or another.



The Line of the Front after the Fight at Messines, 1st November.

On the 2nd the line held by the Gurkhas was broken for a space, but disaster was averted by the skilful handling of their commander. The Indian Army Corps, who had taken over the bulk of the line of the 2nd Corps, was now swelled by the addition of Indian cavalry, and they made a useful addition to the British forces. Though their gallantry at first led to terrible losses, and though they were shaken by the unaccustomed bombardment, they fell into the new conditions and gave a necessary rest to the weary British troops.

The Bavarians again hurled themselves against the lines of the 1st Corps and the 9th French Corps in a violent endeavour to burst through to Ypres. On the 7th the line of Moussy’s French troops south of Ypres was broken, but it was quickly restored by the 3rd Cavalry Division.

\* Viscount French is silent as to this episode, which depends upon the testimony of M. Charles Le Goffic, quoted by M. René Puaux in *Marshal Foch, his Life, his Work, his Faith*, p. 147. The conversation at least rings true, and Viscount French confesses that he thought “ the last barrier between the Germans and the Channel seaboard had broken down ” (“ 1914,” p. 252).

Up to the 10th, day by day, the Bavarians had advanced again and again, had flung themselves with the utmost impetuosity and vigour upon the lines about Ypres. When several units had been shattered in these futile attempts to capture the town, with great rapidity and secrecy a division of the Prussian Guard was brought up. These famous troops were the last resort of the German army. Falkenhayn had hurled half-trained troops in huge numbers against the lines. The British stood firm. Trained and seasoned soldiers in vastly superior numbers were then thrown forward. There was still no effect. Then the Bavarians, renowned for their extraordinary bravery and splendid training, were brought up. Shattered and decimated they were hurled back. The Prussian Guard remained. They had been at Arras. They were hurried up with the Kaiser's commands to take Ypres, where all others had failed.

On the 11th they hurled themselves on the British lines. Fog had fallen over the country for two days. In the damp chill of the morning a heavy bombardment began on the lines in the neighbourhood of Ypres. For three hours it continued. This was the fiercest bombardment the British had as yet suffered. The assault was then made with the utmost violence by the 1st and 4th Brigade of Prussian Guards. The Germans showed extraordinary determination, advancing against a direct and enfilading fire in perfect order. By sheer weight of numbers they managed to break the line of the 1st Corps in three places; but they were not able to get through to Ypres or to derive any advantage from their initial success. A fierce counter-attack on their disordered mass in Polygon Wood inflicted heavy loss, and they were hurled back. Seven hundred of their dead were found behind the British front trenches alone.

The mettle of these famous troops is shown by the fact that after the terrible experiences of this day they returned to the attempt on the next. This time their chief point of attack was south of Ypres. They were again repulsed with enormous loss. The 1st Army Corps seemed invincible. "Words fail me," wrote Sir John French, "to express the admiration I feel for their conduct, or my sense of the incalculable services they rendered. I venture to predict that their deeds during these days of stress and trial will furnish some of the most brilliant chapters which will be found in the history of our time."

It was about this time that the 7th Division was withdrawn from the line. It had left England in full strength, with troops like the 1st Grenadiers, 2nd Scots Guards, and 2nd Gordon Highlanders. They were all war-tried soldiers and they left their mark on history. But when the division was withdrawn it mustered only 44 out of 400 officers, and 2,336 out of some 12,000 men. These losses had been sustained in about three weeks' fighting.

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While these events had been taking place the Germans in great force had been assaulting the line from the coast to Dixmude. It is, indeed, almost wonderful where the new corps came from. Everywhere in the Western theatre of the war the Allies were outnumbered, and here in the north each detail of the line held its position against odds of two or three to one. On 3rd November the Belgians retook Lombartzyde, which lies north of the Yser, but the Germans still held a footing on the left bank of the river, and used it for shelling the railway beyond. Three days later the Belgians seemed to be making headway against the enemy. They advanced along the right bank of the river, from which the Germans had with-



drawn owing to the floods. Below Dixmude, at Bixschoote, Dubois' French troops repulsed a violent attack and advanced.

Bixschoote, lying due north of Ypres, and therefore opening a road behind the salient, had been attacked day after day. Its streets were full of dead and dying; and the Germans could not get through.

On the 8th the Germans opened a heavy attack upon Dixmude, which lies at the bend of the Yser where it turns towards the south-west. The next day a curtain of fog fell over the country, and on the 10th the Germans had carried the town by storm, taking a number of prisoners. The reverse was not serious, except in the sense that every inch gained by the Germans was serious in that it would have to be recovered. The Allies held the canal from Nieuport to Ypres, though the Germans had succeeded in crossing it west of Langemarck. The next two days were spent by them in unavailing attempts to secure a footing on the western bank of the canal.

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Thus the month's fighting, which had grown in violence day by day until the terrible conflicts of 31st October and 11th and 12th November, had at length demonstrated the futility of trying to break through the Allied lines in the north with any force which the Germans could afford to throw into the field.

The Allies had drawn a barrier from La Bassée round Armentières and Ypres, and along the Yser and Ypres-Nieuport Canal to the North Sea coast. Aire, the left of the British line when they first began the operations in the north, is not thirty miles from Dunkirk, and little more than thirty miles from Calais. The Germans were then in force south and west of La Bassée; they held Lille, and there were detachments well to the west of Ypres. Yet they so misconceived and miscalculated the Allied operations, that only when it was too late they found a line of over fifty miles held with the utmost determination to a point on the coast nearly twenty miles north of Dunkirk.

They attempted to exchange numbers and violence for days, but found the attempt futile. What could they have done? it may be asked. It is, of course, clear that, until the fall of Antwerp, a considerable number of troops was held up in Belgium before that fortress. But the Belgians were confined there, and the 4th Corps was lying detached and exposed in the south-west of Belgium. At first the British were in greater numbers in this particular area in the north. But the mistake the Germans made was in not throwing into the mêlée at first the forces they were compelled to throw at last, when in fact it had become useless.

It is as easy as unjust to depreciate the German strategy, tactics, and spirit. The Germans have fought in this war as heroically as soldiers ever fought since the world began. After successive and costly hand-to-hand encounters with the British troops before Ypres the Prussian Guard are reported to have refused at length to advance again. Whether this be true or not it is known to all the world that the German soldiers, even when quite young and untrained, were willing to advance again and again in the most dense formations and in the most exposed way against the terrible fire, direct and enfilade, of the steady British troops.

If the German tactics are capable of criticism on any point it is in their spend-thrift way of hazarding the lives of the soldiers. Further, it is necessary to grasp the difficulty of the problem that confronted the General Staff. The original plan was foiled at the Marne. Everything turned on a swift decision in the West. Large as the German resources in men were, they were not without limit; and when the situa-

tion in the north of France and the south of Belgium began to mature the movement against Warsaw had reached its crisis. Reinforcements could not be sent to both fronts at once, and a choice had to be made. It is a significant, indeed a momentous fact, that the choice when made failed to save either situation. When the decisive battle for Ypres was fought on 31st October, the Germans had been completely beaten in the first attack upon Warsaw and were in full retreat before the Russians. A decisive opportunity had been lost by default in the West and nothing had been gained in the East.

How far the cry "To Calais" was consciously a military and not merely a popular demand it is difficult to say. Certainly it is clear that the seizure of Calais would have been a moral and political as much as a military advantage. The threat to hated England from the nearest point on the Continent might have offered some consolation to a people cheated of the prey they had already in imagination disposed of—Paris. That the fight for Calais, like the defence of the port, was only a secondary consideration in the minds of the opposed military commanders cannot reasonably be doubted. Sir John French's motive in moving north was much more ambitious. He wished to strike with his greatest force upon the then exposed German flank, to turn and render untenable the position on the Aisne, to initiate a correlated movement across the north of France and the south of Belgium. That the movement was impossible he could not have known. The German Staff wished first and foremost to keep the flank open for a turning movement. This small door that still stood ajar was the only feasible entry to the Paris road, and if a movement could be initiated from this opening the French position on the Aisne might be turned and Paris lie again open to the invader.

The factors which brought the second plan to naught will ever stand out in the history of warfare. On both the Allied and the enemy's part the soldiers fought with the utmost bravery. The achievements of the small Belgian army after its terrible experiences culminating in the tragedy of Antwerp, its heroic defence of the Yser against greatly superior forces, its splendid recoil in the last stages of exhaustion—these are among the unforgettable things of all time.

A new and notable feature was the extremely close co-operation between the Allied forces, and this was owing to the masterly generalship of Foch. The gallant French troops often fought in the midst of the British line, relieving the spent soldiery, restoring the line when pressed back by sheer weight of numbers. Sir John French in his dispatch especially thanks Generals d'Urbal and Maud'huy who commanded the forces on his left and right, and General Foch. And the heroism of the British troops cannot be praised too highly. It is indeed a memorable thing that, in these days when peace has masked so many latent qualities of the men who walk about the roads of Great Britain in the pursuit of trivial and humdrum duties, this terrible catastrophe should have pulled the veil aside and revealed all the splendid courage and steadfastness which lies ready to blossom in the fruit of brave deeds when the requisite stimulus is given. Not a mile of this fifty-mile line but would furnish a volume of gallant deeds if the tale were told. But the actors are content that they did what was asked of them and added their share to the crushing of militarism.

The casualty lists on both sides cannot have been less than 300,000, and the battle must ever be regarded as among the great episodes of history.



## XVII. THE BATTLES OF THE VISTULA THE FIRST STRUGGLE FOR WARSAW.

WHILE the battles of the Yser and Ypres were emerging from the struggle for the Channel coast on the West great movements were taking place on the Eastern front.

It was two months before Russia came into contact with the main German forces. In the meantime the German armies in the West had been thrown back from the Marne to the Aisne by appreciably inferior numbers of the Allies; the Austrians had been heavily defeated in Galicia; the Russians, after a serious reverse in East Prussia, had thrown back the Germans from the Niemen and were once again in the Kaiser's country. In mid-September the German Staff must have realised that they could breathe in France, but for the moment they could do no more. Securely entrenched themselves, they could not without heavy reinforcements resume the offensive against the entrenched Allies. But reinforcements could only be thrown into the Western theatre if the Eastern were secure.

Far otherwise was the condition of affairs in the East. The Russians, after taking Lemberg, had invested Przemyśl, taken Jaroslav, Sambor, and Rzeszów. Their extreme left was on and over the Carpathians; their right was on German soil in East Prussia. With the Russians marching on Cracow the Germans beheld the enemy at the gate of Silesia, one of their chief industrial centres; and the Russians in East Prussia were touching the core of German sentiment.

Though affairs were thus anything but promising, there are certain features in this Eastern theatre which made it attractive to the German strategists. Their armies had been formed and equipped to force a decision. Initiative had been diligently fostered so that by bold and energetic action a decision might be won. Now, from the nature of the case, the Eastern theatre was more open to decisive action than the Western. The area is too vast for military operations to come easily to a deadlock even if there were any good defensive positions such as those to be found in the West. To the north of Warsaw there was a distinct chance of envelopment, and in the state of unpreparedness in which the war found Russia the Russian centre might be broken. If such an event could be brought about, and the Russian offensive thus destroyed for some considerable time, the German Staff would be able to draw off army corps which would be supremely valuable in the West.

There were other considerations, too, which prompted and shaped the nature of the German offensive in Russian Poland. The plan was bold and massive. Silesia and East Prussia were threatened. Hence a strong counter-threat must be made against the Russian centre. If the Russians were merely held in East Prussia and Galicia, a bold and decisive blow in the centre would automatically relieve the threatened flanks. Naturally, equally bold and decisive action by the Russians on one or both flanks would imperil the German communications, and consequently the whole German offensive movement. But if the northern flank could be held and a heavy blow struck below the Vistula, this would probably decide the future of the campaign on the Eastern side, at any rate for some months.

But with the German advance towards the Vistula the Austrians were to press forward in Galicia, force the line of the river San, cross the Carpathians, and cut the Russians off from Lemberg and the eastern section of Galicia. If such a plan could be achieved the East Prussian offensive of Russia was doomed. Indeed, if the plan could be carried out, the whole Russian offensive was doomed. Certainly the

plan did not err on the side of modesty ; and, in its main outlines, it seemed, in spite of its stupendous assumptions, feasible enough.

Nor, bold and dazzling as it was, did it lack elements of subtlety. The effect of the plan meant the capture of Poland. Moral and political elements would be involved in such an operation. Poland is not a highly organised country like Belgium. It is a loose conglomerate of thriving manufacturing centres, villages, wastes, forests, and lakeland. A hostile population in such a country would have infinitely more power to harm or help an army. The German weapon of terrorism chosen deliberately for Belgium and Northern France was largely effective ; but it depended essentially on the fact that the areas where it was applied were so highly organised that a blow here or there set up sympathetic waves through the whole area.

But in Poland such waves were, so to say, damped down by the vast areas of insensitive country lying between the towns. Here, of course, the Germans did apply their favourite method of terrorism ; but the people, so Ludendorff informs us, were " docile," and the campaign was undisturbed by them.

The details of the campaign were settled at a conference on 18th September at Neu Sandec. The headquarters of the new 9th Army were placed at Beuthen, near the south-western frontier of Poland-Silesia, and the forces which were to form the spearhead of the German thrust concentrated between Kreuzburg and Cracow. To the north lay only the Landwehr group under General von Frommel. North of Kalisz were frontier guards of Landsturm. A line drawn due west from Kreuzburg to the Vistula would cut it about half-way between Ivangorod and Sandomir ; and from this fact we gain some insight into the bold and imaginative handling of Ludendorff, who in a fortnight was threatening Warsaw. From Radom Mackensen's group was directed to the north-east, and by persuading the Austro-Hungarian Staff to release a corps from his right flank Ludendorff was able to escape from the deadly Russian counter-thrust. Though the armies fought as independent units, it is clear that the negative success they won was due to the foresight and decision of Hindenburg's staff. On one or two occasions disaster must have faced the armies but for the timely interposition of Ludendorff. The 9th Army was on the point of being outflanked north of Radom in the fourth week of October, when the danger was pointed out to the Austrian Staff.

**The First Battle of Warsaw.**—The beginning of October saw the maturing of a strong German invasion of Poland. The main German force was concentrated on the line Kalisz-Czenstochowa-Cracow, a stretch of about 136 miles. The three towns, lying along the Russo-German frontier, mark the line of advance. Roads and rail from Kalisz and Czenstochowa converge on Warsaw. But Czenstochowa and Olkusz also have roads and railways converging upon Kielce and thence upon the Vistula fortress Ivangorod. These two towns have two of the only three bridges across the Vistula, which runs deep and is not fordable. The third bridge is at Novo Georgievsk, which like Ivangorod is a strong fortress. Crossing the main line to Ivangorod to the north-east of Kielce is a line of rail terminating in Ostrowiec, which is not 20 miles from the Upper Vistula.

The German line lay some 120 miles from the Vistula, and upon the right bank of this great river, a good natural obstacle, the Russians concentrated and waited for their enemy to commit himself. Surveying the whole of the Eastern theatre of war, we may conceive it to fall into four divisions. One of these, East Prussia, was the field of separate and independent operations. A second division comprised the



region of Warsaw, north to East Prussia, south to the Pilitza River, an obstacle which formed a natural dividing line between the forces operating to the north and to the south of it. Ivangorod was the centre of a third division, which extended north to the Pilitza and south to the junction of the Vistula and the San. The last division followed the San to the Carpathians.

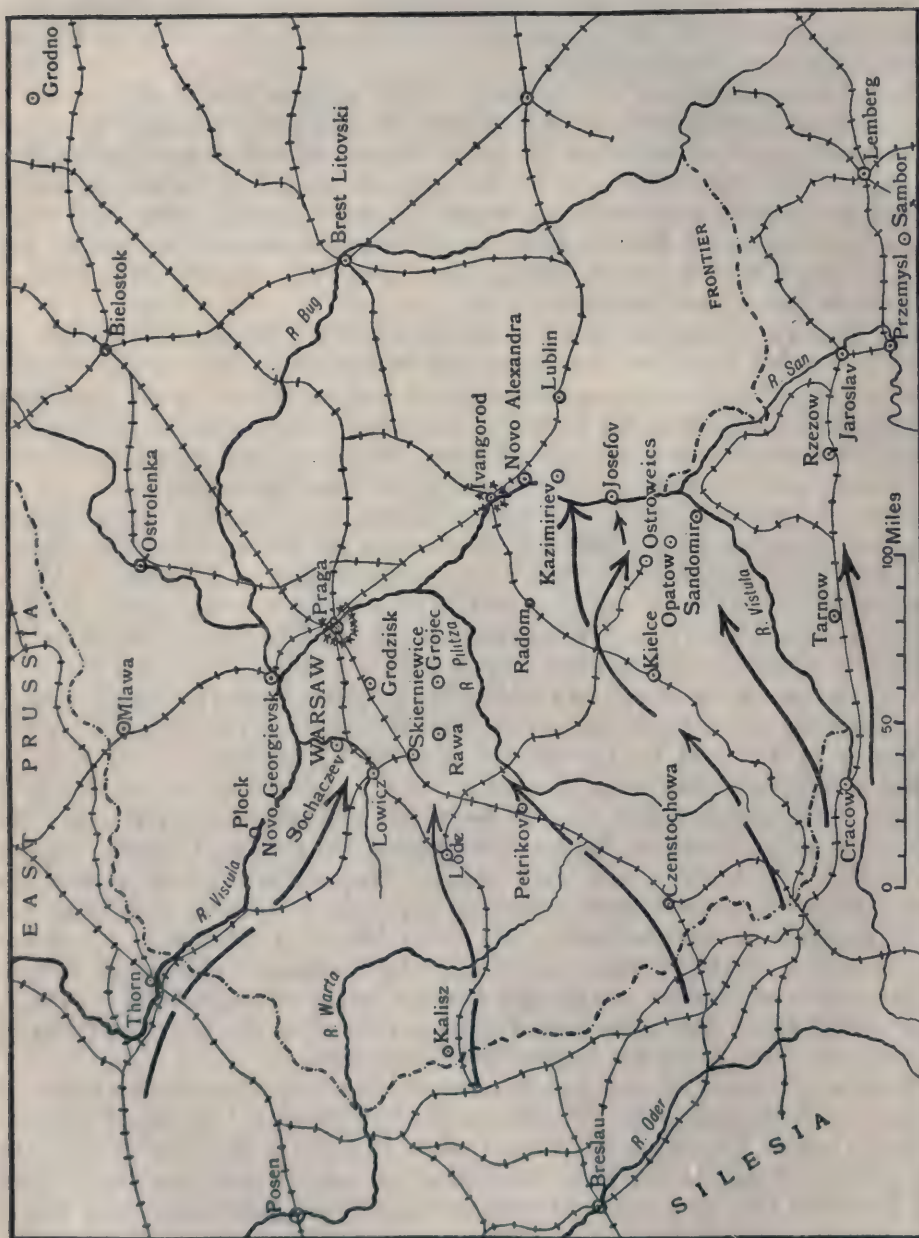
From Ivangorod to the mouth of the Pilitza and as far as Warsaw the country is well roaded and provided with railways. This is especially so on the eastern side; and this fact would form an obvious handicap to a German attempt to force the Russian line between the two fortresses. A railway line runs parallel to the Vistula, and it is well supplied with cross feeding railways. Below Ivangorod neither good roads nor railways supply the Russian line; but the southern angle of the Vistula and San is well supplied with railways which make the San from the Vistula to Jaroslav an attractive line to a Galician enemy.

The Germans advanced with characteristic rapidity. The main object was to break the Russian line about the centre, near Kazimiriev. This town lies on the Vistula, about fifteen to seventeen miles south of Ivangorod, and the point had been chosen because this part of the Vistula, as has been pointed out, must stand or fall by the force concentrated there at the moment. Neither rail nor road lies behind to supply reinforcements with the speed at which they would be required.

Strong forces of artillery and bridging material were concentrated at Opatow from the railhead at Ostrowiecs and at Zwolen from the Radom-Ivangorod railway. This, the weakest section of the Vistula, was to be attacked, and artillery and supplies to be rushed wherever most required. If the attempt at Kazimiriev failed it was to be pressed elsewhere. If the Russian line could be pierced in this neighbourhood it would be comparatively easy to force a decision. The army would be cut into two halves, there was no further line of defence behind for about seventy miles, and even that was not very formidable, and, providing the extremities of the Russian flanks were held, the German victory would be decisive.

The Austro-Hungarian army was put in motion against the line of the San at the end of September, and a German force was marching through Poland. No serious attempt was made to check either advance, but the thin fringes of cavalry did not even keep in touch with the invaders. The Landwehr troops north of the Pilitza reached Sochaczew-Skierniewice-Rawa practically without opposition and almost unknown to the Russians. This sector looked to Warsaw as its centre. But the attack on the fortress was entrusted to Mackensen, who turned sharply to the north from Radom, and on 9th October fought an engagement at Grojec, where a copy of the plan of the Grand Duke was found on the body of an officer. The Germans were already but nineteen miles from Warsaw.

No attack of any magnitude had been expected from the south or south-west of Warsaw. The Russian Staff, with what posterity may regard as ampler ideas of strategy, thought the attack on Warsaw would be directed from the north. The Germans had already advanced to the Niemen on one occasion, and the Russian Staff conceived their plan to aim at seizing the line of the Niemen and then taking Warsaw in reverse from the north. With such a conception of the German plan the Russian headquarters had been moved to Grodno. To the Russian Staff it seemed incredible that any one should march against a town, leaving its flank threatened by such a fortress as Novo Georgievsk. The advance from Grodzisk and Grojec took the Russians completely by surprise.



Von Hindenburg's First Advance on Warsaw.



On the 9th began a violent battle, which persisted for two whole days and seemed to increase in intensity until the very end. General von Mackensen turned north at Grojec and threw the bulk of his force against the capital; the German lines began to converge upon Warsaw. Three Siberian corps, splendidly built men, with the Russian characteristic of being able to take any amount of punishment, barred the progress of an equal number of German soldiers with superior artillery. The Russians lost heavily. The words seem too restrained to paint the actual state of affairs. Whole regiments were annihilated, and the stream of wounded and weary soldiers falling back into Warsaw first told General Scheidemann how near the Germans lay. The Cossacks proved bad scouts, and little scouting had been attempted towards the south. Moreover, it is reported that the Russian general in command at Warsaw had to contend against the treachery of his subordinates also. One general, in command of a Siberian force south of Warsaw, Krause, is said to have been court-martialed during the battle, and shot for his suspicious behaviour; and Scheidemann was relieved of his command later for allowing himself to be surprised.

The struggle by the 11th was at its height and the fighting had penetrated to the suburbs of Warsaw. The German line ran from Blonie through Piaseczno to the Vistula. From Blonie the line stretched towards the west and slightly north to Sochaczew. General von Scheidemann established his headquarters near Blonie, and on the 13th, after a terrible battle, forced the Germans to evacuate it. The following day he hurled them out of Prushkow, another of the Warsaw suburbs; and, on the 15th, Nadarzyn was retaken at the point of the bayonet. So far, when once contact with the Russians had been obtained, the advantage seemed to go to them in spite of the German superiority in artillery and in numbers in the first phase.

The German force operating here seems to have been between 200,000 and 300,000 men. The Germans themselves put it at the latter figure in the end, and the state of things can well be pictured. About 120,000 men were at first engaged; then, by the concentration from the west and south, the numbers were swelled to some 200,000; and after the first recoil further reinforcements were hurried up, swelling the total German forces about Warsaw to some 300,000 men.

At the same time that von Scheidemann was successfully pushing the Germans back on a front facing Warsaw from the south-west the Germans were making a bold attempt to undermine his success and achieve a decision in their favour by forcing their way across the Vistula at Gora Kalwarija. The attempt was doomed to failure. This town, which lies on the west bank of the river, fifteen or sixteen miles south of Warsaw, is still in the section of the Vistula which is well supplied by railways on the eastern bank. An attack at such a point had not merely to overcome the force at present holding the opposite bank, but as many men as the Russians could put there by an efficient series of railways. On the 13th, however, the attempt was made, and the Russians shrewdly enough allowed the pontoon bridge to be fitted together and the soldiers to crowd on to it. The Russian artillery then destroyed it with little trouble. They well knew that a huge army like that which faced them could not carry an inexhaustible supply of pontoons across a country so ill-provided with railways.

Meanwhile the Russians, as we have seen, operating with inferior numbers, had been pressing back the German line. German aeroplanes for many days and for

many to come had been flying over Warsaw and dropping bombs. More deaths are said to have been caused by this method of attack in Warsaw than in any other town on either front for the first six months of the war. The reason is not far to seek. Russia was particularly badly equipped in aeroplanes, and the few airmen were mostly French.

A good story is told in connection with one of these. He was flying over the Russian lines one day, when the Russian troops, not being able to distinguish friend from foe—as Sir John French records to have been the case on the Western front—fired at him. He at once came down and protested volubly in French against such treatment. He was promptly arrested. He knew no Russian: his captors no French. When the affair reached the ear of the General Staff orders were given that no one was to fire at *any* aeroplane. The next day a German airman flew over the lines, and finding his reception so pacific concluded that he had made an error and that the men must in fact be Germans. He descended and was, of course, captured.

Certainly the few airmen on the Russian side were far from sufficient for reconnaissance and could not keep the Germans from their daily flights over Warsaw. The appearance of the enemy aeroplanes at length became so frequent that they ceased to produce the awe they had at first inspired. Men leaving houses in the city would unconsciously pause on the threshold and look to the sky as instinctively and unconcernedly as one looks up and down the street for fear of traffic.

On 16th October the Germans returned to the offensive north of the Pilitza with eight army corps (320,000 men), according to the German official wireless, and were successful in recapturing some of the ground lost. The next day they succeeded in crossing the Vistula between Warsaw and Gora Kalwarija at Karczew. This town, not far from the outskirts of Warsaw, was obviously of tremendous importance; but for that very reason the Germans could never have expected to hold it in the face of an enemy possessed of such dogged endurance and fierce fighting spirit as that of the Russians. They were thrown back again, and the Russians at once got their pontoon bridge in position for the pursuit. It is quite characteristic of the Russians that a section or two was missing and could not be procured for two days. The delay allowed the Germans time to entrench, and the Russians saw that a crossing in such circumstances must be costly.

But the struggle attained its greatest intensity at Blonie. The Germans had been compelled to evacuate the town on the 13th by about an equal number of Russians; now, from the 16th to the 19th, they returned to the attack with increased numbers, but against a heavily reinforced enemy. The odds, finally, here and to the north-west came to about four to one in the Russian favour. Rennenkampf, who was now in charge of the Warsaw army, had also thrown into the scale a huge amount of artillery. Heavy howitzers were brought from the Bug fortress Brest-Litovsk, and, on the 19th, the Germans, in face of a strong counter-offensive from Novo Georgievsk, which threatened their envelopment and annihilation, began during the night to withdraw. So skilfully was this operation conducted and so bad was the Russian intelligence service that Mackensen simply disappeared. The stragglers and material which are always taken after the retreat of a large army amounted to a minimum. The Germans lay for a week between Lowicz and Nowe Miasto, before they were attacked at the latter place and compelled to resume their retreat. The good roads made by the Germans in their advance were destroyed, bridges blown up, and the country laid waste.





The Russian Counter-attack.

Cavalry sent to harry the German rearguard on the 20th returned without locating it. When it was located on the following day the time had passed when it could be enveloped. Yet the Russian Staff had prepared the most deadly trap for the Germans. Issuing from Novo Georgievsk and across the Vistula at Gora Kalwarija, strong forces sought to get round the flanks of the retreating enemy. Artillery with a division of cavalry was thrown against the northern flank at Lowicz and sought to pass across to gain contact towards the south-west with the force from Gora Kalwarija. This would have cut Mackensen's line of retreat.

Mackensen hustled his army along the heavy roads with greater haste, and successfully evaded the closing jaws of the trap. He had to march with such speed that he could not carry all his wounded. If the armies had been changed, and it had been the Russians in retreat, they would have been annihilated. But the Russians lost touch with the Germans, and the history of the surprise of Warsaw, the splendid defence of the city, the masterly strategy of the Russian Staff, and its failure, epitomise the history of the Russian arms in the war. Splendid strategy and extraordinary fighting powers ever shackled by a faulty reconnaissance and a fatal immobility. This last handicap is largely a matter of discipline. Shrewd observers, while full of admiration for the splendid fighting quality of the Moujik, lamented the fact that he could not be trained to anything more than a very approximate discipline.

In falling back from before Warsaw the Germans left some of their wounded on the ground to the most terrible of fates. The district south of Novo Georgievsk and west of Warsaw, where for little short of a fortnight they had been fighting, is a country of marsh and woodland. Deep in the forests packs of wolves held sway, and many of the German wounded were torn limb from limb while still alive. The Russian Red Cross had often difficulty in making the wolves forego their prey.

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**Before Ivangorod.**—So far we have followed the fortunes of only one section of the huge German and Austrian force which was to seize and hold Poland. The fate of the offensive south of the Pilitza depended to some extent upon the fortune which befell the left wing operating to the north of the river towards Warsaw. But even when the German army to the north had been compelled to retreat a really decisive victory south of the Pilitza would have given the Germans to the north a chance to recover by necessitating a withdrawal of the Russians to meet the enemy advancing in the south-east. The Pilitza could, of course, have been crossed by the Russians, and then the German line to the south would have been turned just as the line to the north had been compelled to fall back by the flank attack from Novo Georgievsk.

But two considerations rendered such an operation by the Russians extremely doubtful; and it did not as a fact take place. The Pilitza is very thickly wooded towards its confluence with the Vistula, and any force attempting to cross it would have been handicapped by this fact. A small force of Germans entrenched in the wooded country on the south bank would have exacted fearful toll for any crossing. Furthermore, a force of sufficient strength to produce any effect on the southern side would have seriously weakened the flank movement of the Russians against the German left wing. The Pilitza was in effect a barrier which divided the northern and southern parts of the campaign almost completely. Clearly, the Germans south of the Pilitza would be in a position of great peril if the Russians could march in



force along the northern bank to a certain point. But until that point was reached their fate was largely independent of that of the German armies to the north, and the fortune of these might be retrieved by a lucky stroke.

This section of the Vistula battle front, comprising some ninety miles, was more strongly marked in a negative way both with regard to the Germans and to the Russians. It was not particularly suited to a German offensive except that the right bank was not well supplied with roads or railways, not very wide at certain points, and not especially protected in any way. Neither was it particularly suited to a Russian offensive since the western bank was fringed with open country with wooded land beyond. The effect of this was to make a German advance costly, while it facilitated mere bombardments. Similarly a Russian advance across the Vistula would have been equally costly.

Yet it was in this section of the front the Austro-Germans meant to deal their heaviest blow. The line pierced, either half might be rolled up. The southern half might be driven back upon the army fighting in Galicia, or the northern thrust back upon the force defending Warsaw. Below the Itzanka and to the Carpathians the Austrians held the line; north to the Pilitza the Germans were stationed. It must be remembered that all the operations from the beginning of the Vistula campaign were largely controlled by the German army, commanded by General von Hindenburg with his faithful henchman, Ludendorff. The Austrian cavalry seem to have been used over almost the whole line, probably from a shortage in German cavalry on this front. The allied army, in the second week of October, had approached sufficiently near to Ivangorod to open up a heavy bombardment with its siege guns. The effect of this was to prevent any issue from the fortress of a force which could jeopardise the attempt to cross the Vistula.

This was made near Kazimiriev, about twenty miles south of Ivangorod, on the 13th and 14th. After a fierce engagement the Germans succeeded in placing a few battalions on the opposite bank; but the success was only momentary. Kuszky, now in charge of this sector, rapidly concentrated a force which, though small, was formidable against the enemy, and the invaders were annihilated.

Though the Austro-German force held out in this section of the line with the utmost stubbornness, this was their only success. Negatively, the Russians were thus successful from the beginning. But to drive back the enemy required a strong and resolute counter-offensive. This would have been unnecessary but for the Pilitza River, which cut off the army to the north from that to the south. Fringed on its southern side with woods and heavily so towards its confluence with the Vistula, it acted as a bulkhead against the overwhelming onrush to the north. Without it the left flank of the enemy south of the Pilitza must have fallen back with the right flank of the enemy above the river.

Subtle and vigorous as had been the Russian counter-offensive in the Warsaw region, it was equally well conceived and urged with indomitable courage in the neighbourhood of Ivangorod. The bridgeheads of the fortress were covered by the Austro-German heavy guns. Ivangorod had, therefore, simply to hold out at first. This achieved, its rôle was sufficiently fulfilled. The Russian offensive contemplated the throwing across the river of large bodies of troops, and this movement was initiated about Kozieniece. Kozieniece lies some twenty miles north of Ivangorod, and a mile or two from the left bank of the Vistula. The difference between the two movements, the Russian and the German, is more than that between success and

failure. It is the difference between the supreme achievements of heroism and the level of ordinary valour.

On the 13th a Caucasian division crossed the river in boats. Kozieniece lies in the open country which fringes the Vistula. A few miles north-west lies rising ground framing the valley of the Radomka; south is more rising ground. Straight in front, south and south-east, is the wooded country which makes the peculiar peril of the Vistula crossing. In such country it was their function to hold the ground seized in order that the main Russian force could deploy securely when it had succeeded in crossing. For several days the heroic soldiers maintained their position under a deadly fire from about eight times their number of the enemy firmly entrenched in the forests. Day and night without cessation the men stoically kept at their post under a constant fire from small arms and artillery. And when the main army began to cross and the opposing troops began to approximate to equality in numbers the position was hardly improved. Now the Russians had to advance through the forests and fight their way foot by foot against every natural obstacle immensely strengthened by artificial snares. Heavy bayonet work day after day at length won its way.

By the 20th the tide had begun to turn definitely in the Russian favour. Their position across the Vistula was now assured, and other bodies of troops were being thrown through Ivangorod, and over the river at Novo Alexandria, a little north of Kazimiriev. The line still swayed backward and forward; but on the 22nd the Austro-German line had begun to fall back towards Radom. The following days there were renewed attempts by the enemy to beat back the Russian advance, but by the 26th the Russian flank movement from Kozieniece had developed to such an extent that the left of the Austro-German line was compelled to retire. The allied line still clung tenaciously to the Vistula, at the mouth of the Itzanka. Above this point it fell back towards the south-west. The retreat of the Austrians uncovered the right of the German Guard Reserve Corps, and Colonel Hoffmann secured a delay which saved the German troops.

There may have been some desperate hope that even now the retreat might be retrieved by a piercing of the Vistula front. But the only success of this sort fell to the Russians. They had succeeded in crossing the river on the 25th at Solec, a few miles south of Kazimiriev, and later they crossed at Josefow, still farther south. The Austrians offered the most obstinate resistance, and it was not until the 30th that the Russians entered Ostrowiecs. In this neighbourhood a fiercely contested battle sealed the fate of the first German attack on the Vistula, and by 3rd November the Russians were once more in Kielce, and the enemy were in full retreat towards the frontier.

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It may at first sight seem strange that battles on this front had a fierceness which was distinctly greater than those on the Western front. But a few considerations will show why this must have been the case. On only one occasion in the Western campaign, during the first six months, did the Allies take the counter-offensive against the Germans, and in a battle lasting about a week the invaders retreated to carefully prepared entrenchments. Only once, at Ypres, was a battle fought *à outrance*, and it is difficult to conceive of a more terrible conflict than that which took place about this pretty Belgian town. But on the Russian front for almost a month the opposing armies fought pitched battles in the open. The two forces were in contact almost the whole time, and the line of retreat was not forty or fifty miles, but nearly three



times that distance. There were on the West front obstacles and cover. On the Eastern front the whole gamut of country was sounded. Sometimes one, sometimes the other side fought in cover. In the wooded country about Kozeniece nearly 20,000 dead of both armies were found, and the terrible burden of that battlefield beggars description.

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**The Battles of the San.**—In the Galician section of the battle front Austria-Hungary had marshalled from 300,000 to 400,000 men, exclusive of reserves. The nature of the country here broke up the campaign into numerous separate battles, none of the magnitude of those which occurred in Poland, but all contested with a spirit which seems to indicate that the Austrians, now forming part of the Austro-German army and fighting with the famous Hindenburg, were determined to prove to him and to themselves that they were not as worthless as the completeness of their former defeat by Russia might suggest. The success they achieved was considerable, and it would have been greater but for the German retreat in Poland.

By the 12th of the month the Austrians had reoccupied Jaroslav and repelled a Russian enveloping movement about Przemyśl with heavy loss to the Russians. Two days later they had thrown back a Russian force from Lancut to the San, Austrian cavalry had entered Przemyśl, and the Austrians were marching from the Carpathians against the Russian line Stryj (thirty-five miles south of Lemberg), Sambor, Medyka (a few miles to the east of Przemyśl). The Austrians did not at first succeed in threatening the main Russian communications by approaching Medyka. The Russians fended them off from this danger point, and engaged them at Sanok and Lisko and thence to the Carpathian ridge.

About the middle of October, then, the Austrian position may be briefly described as following the line of the San to Jaroslav and Przemyśl, thence south-west to Sanok and Lisko, whence it lay like the grapnel end of a balloon waving and seeking a foothold in the Carpathians. While Jaroslav and Przemyśl had been taken by the Austrians, the Russians dominated the eastern side of the river still, and hence controlled the bridgeheads. The Austrian rôle was to secure and carry the line of the San. A strong Austrian force established across the San would not only take its position of due importance in the combined advance across the Vistula, which, it must be remembered, at this time was still being hotly contested, but would also have taken the first step to a decision. The stronger Austrian army was expected to deliver the main blow.

Subsidiary to this object was the attempt to cut the Lemberg-Przemyśl railway and turn the whole Russian line. There is little need to follow the further results and implications of such an operation, since this section of the line, Przemyśl to the Carpathians, seems never to have been even remotely imperilled. It was not the sort of country in which decisive and overwhelming successes are obtained. Such advantages as there were lay in the hands of the Russians, who controlled the southern foothills of the Carpathians. Nor does the Jaroslav-Przemyśl section of the line seem to have been strongly threatened, although a good railway and road followed the western bank of the river.

The most interesting part of this vast battlefield was the angle formed by the rivers Vistula and San. The main railway line from Cracow sends from Debica a branch line which follows the line of the Vistula and ends in Sandomir. This

important town lies just below the junction of the Vistula and the San. Across the Vistula a loop was thrown from the main Galician railway by another line which runs parallel to the San until it cuts the main railway line again west of Jaroslav. The railway, therefore, forms a triangle, the base of which is part of the main line from Cracow, and the apex of which points to the junction of the Vistula and San. The base of the triangle measures about fifteen miles and is followed by a fine road, which indeed follows the whole of the main line to Przemyśl. The triangle is thus well supplied with communications. Far otherwise is the situation on the Russian side of the San. Here there is neither a good road nor rail. There are no facilities even remotely comparable with those on the Austrian side for supply and reinforcement.

Another striking feature about this section of the battlefield is that on both sides of the San to Jaroslav the ground is wooded; but on the river banks the country is open for a mile or two. It is therefore similar to much of the Vistula country in being suited better for defence than offence. Contrasting the two sides, the Austrian and the Russian, how much stronger was the former. It is this fact which brought it about that this section of the line held out longer than all the rest.

In the middle of October the Austrians established on the San began to attempt a crossing. Time after time they were repulsed; but on several occasions small forces made their way to the eastern bank. On one of these occasions, on the 20th, the advance of the Austrians on the right bank was opposed by a Russian regiment. The commander gave orders for a bayonet charge, and putting himself at the head led his men to the attack. With such energy was the charge carried out that the Austrians were thrown back into the river, and not one remained alive on the eastern bank. Three days later the Russians, assuming the counter-offensive, forced a crossing at three places, Rozwadow, Nisko, and Rudnik, places on the railway parallel to the San about twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four miles from its junction with the Vistula respectively.

For almost a week the position of the Russian troops which had crossed was unenviable. Situated somewhat like the Caucasian division at Kozeniece, they had to hold out in flat open country against an enemy skilfully entrenched in wooded country beyond. The position on this side of the San, indeed, lent itself better than the eastern to defensive action. Heavy howitzers lay cunningly concealed in the forests, and it was difficult to locate them or even the infantry. In three days the Russians had made some headway against the enemy, and the Austrian line wavered and swayed to the south and south-west.

Meanwhile the Austrians had engaged the Russians south of Przemyśl and had forced their way some twenty miles nearer the Przemyśl-Sambor line. They had also pushed up from the Carpathians to Wyszkw and Skole, on the road to Stryj. To the south-west of Przemyśl a sanguinary battle had taken place, and the advantage lay with the Russians, who practically destroyed the 30th Hungarian Honved Division and captured twenty guns.

The Austrian successes were of little value unless the movement north of Jaroslav could be pressed home. Towards the end of the month the Austrians, convinced of this fact, attempted a heavy renewed offensive on the whole line of the San. It was partly a forlorn hope and partly an attempt, if this failed, to cover a falling back of the whole line. Such an operation was an exceedingly delicate manœuvre in a hilly district like that of the Carpathian foothills, and a false step might well lead to



local disaster. The renewed offensive seems to have met with such success that the Russians were driven back across the San. But there the success stopped. The Austrians were unable to cross the San in pursuit, and finding their position hopeless the order was given for retreat.

On 3rd November the crisis had come and passed. For some days the Russians had been fighting for inches at Sandomir, which was a valuable Austrian foothold, in that it allowed troops to be thrown across the Vistula into the triangle of the rivers and the railway. On that day the Russians occupied Sandomir. They also crossed the San in force at Nisko and Rozwadow, and the immediate object of the Austrians now became an effort to prevent their retreating lines being cut to pieces. Two days later the Russian victory was complete, and the enemy were falling back hurriedly upon Cracow. Jaroslav, naturally, reverted to the Russians, with some 5,000 prisoners. Przemyśl was reinvaded, and the Russian army, flushed



The Counter-attack on the San.

with victory, pressed on to Cracow. This is but part of the toll of victory. The Germans, as we have said, left few stragglers and little material behind. Indeed, they even carried off most of their wounded in their masterly retreat from before Warsaw. But the Austrians, falling back north of the Vistula and south of Kielce, lost in one week some 200 officers and 15,000 men, besides numerous pieces of artillery.

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The campaign of the Vistula had therefore failed, and failed completely, for the time being. It had been carefully planned, and if it was open at the outset to the objection which proved its death blow, this was probably inevitable. The Germans could hardly have been blind to the risk they ran in not attempting to hold off the flank movement which would obviously be made from Novo Georgievsk. Hindenburg had not illimitable forces and neither had he endless time. Probably he thought

that the very suddenness of the blow at Warsaw would ensure its success. To entrench against Novo Georgievsk would take time, and if the Germans crossed the Vistula and carried Warsaw, such a movement would be unnecessary. And it seems almost certain that if Mackensen had not been unduly delayed by the heavy roads, which placed a severe handicap upon his speed of advance as well as on his transport, Warsaw would have fallen. This, in fact, is the only occasion in the first six months of the war in which von Ludendorff's generalship had come near success when it was not based upon the decided advantage afforded by a terrain he thoroughly knew.

The retreat was more masterly than the advance. To have fallen back over such a distance with so little loss is an achievement greater than that of the British from Mons to the Marne. But Mackensen had not the Germans against him, or no doubt the fate of his manœuvre would have been different.

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A question which no doubt arises in connection with the campaign in Russia is why Russia, whose numbers were almost inexhaustible, placed so few men in the field. The numbers engaged by Russia could hardly have been at this stage more than those employed against her, say a million. The reason for this seeming illogic will be found in a military order, published about this time, in a Lemberg newspaper. The order offered various prizes for rifles (about twelve shillings), Russian and Austrian; cartridges, cloaks, belts, rifle straps, and cartridge cases. The fact is, of course, that Russia was sadly ill-equipped for such a war, and had not the factories to turn out equipment with the requisite speed. Germany had been preparing for war for years, a thing which seems wholly evil to an advanced democracy, and Russia had not been preparing. The Allies were to suffer yet many months for thus pursuing an enlightened policy. Such is the disadvantage every State a degree more highly civilised suffers in conflict with one nearer to barbarism.



## BOOK II.

### THE MEANING OF SEA POWER.

#### I. TWO NAVAL FIGHTS: BORKUM AND CORONEL.

IN the second half of the first phase the meaning of sea power began to emerge more clearly. The war strayed to almost every part of the world. There were naval battles on each side of South America, in the Pacific; there was a brief siege on Chinese territory; and the first attempts to pierce the Dardanelles and to invade Egypt were made. These were the more spectacular implications of sea power. What passed almost unnoticed and certainly unmarked was the gradual gathering to the aid of the Allies of soldiers from the distant British Dominions, from Australia, from Canada, and from India; the capture of a great amount of German and Austrian tonnage; and the constant stream of vessels to and from England and her Allies bringing material of all sorts for their use. At the opening of this period the Germans were still challenging the Allied sea supremacy with weapons approved by international law. At the end the attempt had been abandoned, and Germany had fallen back upon methods which were ultimately to cause her defeat by involving America in the war. Superior force is to-day so inevitably decisive at sea that no warships are justified in challenging an appreciably stronger squadron. On land an army may succeed in holding, and even in repelling, a force much stronger numerically and in artillery. This is the history of the Battle of the Marne, for instance, where the Allies put into the field an appreciably smaller number of men than the Germans. Manœuvring and *moral* may make an appreciably smaller force stronger at a given point; but one cannot manœuvre or infuse *moral* into a 6-inch gun to make it any match for a 13.5-inch gun. Such a gun as the latter can fire effectively at from ten to thirteen miles, whereas the former is useless at three miles. The history of the modern sea fight is the history of the appearance of a ship with heavier guns in a contest with inferior metal. When the *Lion* steamed full speed into the mêlée at Heligoland the struggle was over. Overwhelming superiority Sir Cloudesley Shovel long ago prescribed for naval victory; but never has the prescription been so inevitable as to-day.

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On 17th October the new light cruiser *Undaunted*, with four torpedo boat destroyers, the *Lance*, *Lennox*, *Legion*, and *Loyal*, were patrolling off Borkum, one of the German islands which lies in front of the mouth of the Ems. The rôle of these destroyers is to torpedo battleships; they have a speed of 35 knots, and of 807 tons register. The flotilla met an equal number of German destroyers, but all older ships. Here was the preponderance of force. The German destroyers could do little or no harm by their guns against the *Undaunted*, and the guns of the latter were

inevitably fatal to such small fry as destroyers. They never had a chance, and after an hour's engagement all the German boats were sunk.

The interest of the engagement is not the victory so much as the site, and the fact that the German ships fought. Their speed should have saved them; but probably the British destroyers shepherded them off from their base, and all preferred to sink rather than surrender. The engagement, like the Heligoland battle, took place in German waters; and the British cruiser and its attendants were liable to be engaged at any moment by superior odds. Another feature of interest is that the commander of the *Undaunted* was Captain Cecil H. Fox, who may be said to have opened the war for the British. It was the cruiser *Amphion*, commanded by Captain Fox, which sunk the mine-layer *Königin Luise* on 5th August. The *Amphion* was itself sunk shortly afterwards by a mine. Captain Fox was knocked insensible by the explosion of the mine, but recovered, and was able to leave his ship before it sank under the explosion of a second mine. Captain Fox's new command had only been in commission about six weeks, and the exploit was therefore notable on that account too. Only thirty-one Germans were saved, and the loss on the British side amounted to one officer and four men wounded.

**The Battle of Coronel.**—Much more tragic was an action which occurred off the coast of Chile on 1st November. The German ships which had, at the outbreak of war, been stationed in Chinese waters, had steamed off to play the rôle of corsair to the Allied shipping. The exploits of the *Emden*, *Scharnhörs*t, and *Gneisenau* have yet to be mentioned. But they were such that, though they could not check or gravely imperil the safety of the Allied shipping, they contributed a certain element of risk to a limited sea area. Already a number of ships had been sunk and a French possession had been bombarded, and it was necessary to put an end to their depredations. Something was done by stopping their earths, so to say; and there were large numbers of warships scouring the seas to find and engage them.

It was, of course, no part of the *métier* of any of these German ships to fight. Their whole rôle was to harry commerce, and to damage coaling stations and ports of call belonging to the Allies, without risking damage to themselves. Damaged or sunk they were completely useless, even if in an engagement they had first sunk six times their number of the Allied ships. The Allied preponderance was so great that a vagrant squadron could not hope to make an impression upon it. Such being the case it is strange to find the German ships steaming together. Four ships could produce no greater an effect than one against unarmed ships, and if caught by an Allied squadron all might be sunk. The only explanation which seems to throw any light upon such a collection of ships is that the Allied chase was growing so warm that the ships were forced to keep together.

Another suggestion has been made which is worth some consideration. It has been suggested that the German squadron had been notified by spies that a weak British squadron was steaming in the vicinity. The improbability of a German squadron going out deliberately to engage a squadron not markedly inferior in ordinary conditions, at any rate on paper, is such that the spy theory may almost be dismissed. Moreover, even granting that the German admiral was informed of the proximity of a hostile squadron, the fact that his squadron could engage it presumes that his ships must just have been collected together. It was not his business to fight. It was his function to evade an engagement, and send his vessels to ply a predatory course as far afield as it was safe to go.



It is this consideration which throws a light on the comparative weakness of the British squadron which caught the German ships on 1st November off Coronel, on the Chilean coast. The British ships comprised the cruisers *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, and *Glasgow*, with the armed merchant ship *Otranto*; and the German squadron was composed of the *Scharnhörs*t, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, and *Nürnberg*. The *Scharnhörs*t, the flagship of Admiral Graf von Spee, was the crack firing ship in the German navy; and the German force as a whole was newer and more formidable ships, and had the advantage in speed. The *Good Hope*, the flagship of Rear-Admiral Cradock, carried two old 9.2 guns; but with the exception of these the whole British squadron had no guns to be compared with the armament of the *Scharnhörs*t and *Gneisenau*, each of which carried eight 8.2 guns.

The British squadron was looking for the German cruisers, but, as has been pointed out already, it did not expect to meet a formidable squadron; and for any one of the German ships the British admiral would have given a good account. Limping behind at, comparatively speaking, a snail's pace was the battleship *Canopus*, with an armament of 12-inch guns. But in the engagement it was never seen. The *Good Hope* signalled to it by wireless, but it seems clear that the battleship received no signals. The Germans jammed the wireless; and even if the *Canopus* had received the signals she could not have reached the scene of battle in time. The *Otranto*, a perfectly useless vessel to engage in a sea fight with a modern cruiser, took no part in the engagement, and was ordered to steam off out of range.

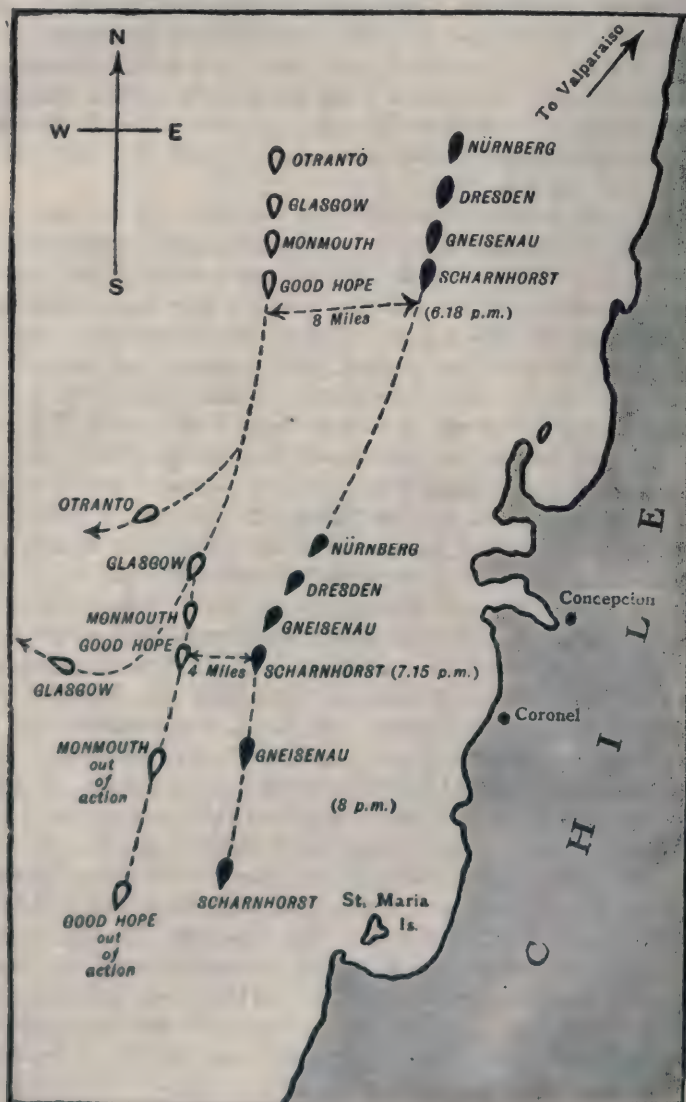
It was in a heavy stormy sea that, on Sunday, 1st November, the cruiser *Glasgow* left Coronel early in the morning to rejoin the *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, and *Otranto*. Early in the afternoon the *Good Hope* signalled that there was an enemy warship towards the north, and orders were given to spread out and steam towards it. The *Glasgow*, being the fastest ship, was ordered about four o'clock to steam ahead and see what the smoke on the horizon came from. On her return she reported that it was the *Scharnhörs*t, *Gneisenau*, *Dresden*, and *Leipzig* (it was ascertained later that it was the *Nürnberg* and not the *Leipzig*). It was at once realised that the British squadron had hardly half the effective strength of the German ships. In such conditions it is strange that Admiral Cradock should have engaged. But there seems to have been no hesitation. The *Good Hope* was at the moment out of sight, but in response to orders the British ships concentrated on the flagship.

At 5.47 the squadron formed in line, in the order: *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, *Glasgow*, and *Otranto*. Half an hour later the German ships were observed to be steering south, and Admiral Cradock signalled to the *Canopus*, "I am going to attack enemy now." The Germans were still almost nine miles away, and kept that distance. Their speed gave them the advantage, and they were able to engage at their selected moment. They chose to lie inshore. While the sun was above the horizon such a position gave odds to the British squadron lying farther to the west. Hence the German admiral refused to engage until after sunset. The sun went down behind the British ships at 6.55, leaving them silhouetted against the afterglow, while the dying light made the German cruisers inshore difficult to distinguish.

At 7.3 the enemy opened fire at a distance of about seven miles. The squadrons were on converging courses, and each engaged his *vis-à-vis*. In the heavy seas the contest became one between twelve German 8.2 guns and two British 9.2 guns, and the Germans had the advantage of the light. In about ten minutes both the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth* were on fire. This was the result of the third German salvo,

and one of the 9.2 guns was put out of action at the same time. The *Otranto*, which had been acting as a target for the German ships, was now ordered to retire.

When the range was much reduced the broadside of the *Glasgow* came into play. She had to engage the *Dresden* and *Nürnberg*, and later on came under the fire of one of



Battle of Coronel, 1st November.

the big cruisers. The fires on the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* were got under control, but both ships were soon alight again, and the *Good Hope* was seen to be now unmanageable. She was attempting to steer towards the enemy by means of her screws to bring her torpedoes into play; but she was not able to approach nearer than about 6,000 yards, when a tremendous explosion took place in her fore part,



her funnels were blown into the air, and flames mounted to about 200 feet high. It was quite dark by this time, and the end of the cruiser could not be seen. The firing still continued by the flashes of the opposing guns. The *Monmouth* was sinking by the bows, but, even when the result could not have been in doubt, attempted to ram a German cruiser which was following her. She had, however, become unmanageable.

Some time afterwards the *Glasgow* signalled to the *Monmouth*, "Enemy following us," but received no reply. The rising moon showed the German ships steaming towards the *Glasgow*, and as no assistance could be rendered to the *Monmouth* the *Glasgow* went full speed towards the south. By 8.50 the enemy was out of sight. Half an hour later numerous flashes of fire told of the final attack on the *Monmouth*.

The gallant but unequal contest was over. The Germans had fought with considerable skill, and the *Scharnhorst* justified her reputation. But the odds were on the enemy side. The British had met with a reverse, and the Germans enjoyed a temporary triumph.

In reporting the action, the captain of the *Glasgow*, Captain John Luce, states that: "Though it was most trying to receive a great volume of fire without a chance of returning it adequately, all kept perfectly cool, there was no wild firing, and discipline was the same as at battle practice. . . . The serious reverse has entirely failed to impair the spirit of officers and ship's company, and it is our unanimous wish to meet the enemy again as soon as possible."

Out of 600 shells aimed at the *Glasgow* five struck her on the waterline, but not in vital places. It is one of the strange hazards of war that this unarmoured cruiser should have emerged safely from an engagement with armoured cruisers of heavy gun power. One hole in the cruiser measured some six feet by three. On three occasions shells pierced the bunkers, which proved a very efficient improvised armour.

For three days the *Glasgow* steamed at its highest. Its course at the beginning was west-north-west to evade the German cruisers, which were moving towards the south. Later the *Glasgow* turned south to warn the *Canopus* in the Magellan Straits, whence both steamed off to the Falkland Islands to await the opportunity for revenge.

## II. THE FIVE-SHILLING REBELLION.

IT is difficult to find a parallel for treachery so sordid and fidelity so magnificent as that which distinguished the rebellion in the Union of South Africa. The whole episode is compounded of amazing antitheses: the promoted Corporal Maritz, become traitor, dealing as a plenipotentiary with the German Governor of South Africa; the most formidable of opponents of Britain in the South African War, General Botha, become Prime Minister, loyally taking the field and fighting with supreme and tragic skill against his former comrades and colleagues, De Wet and Beyers; the implacable, religious fanatic, De Wet, finding his bitterest reproach against British rule that he had been fined five shillings for the supremely Christian act of sjamboking a native; the competent commander of the Defence Force, turned traitor, vanquished, and killed by the slipping of his horse in a flooded stream;

the pastmaster of veldt warfare, De Wet, rounded up and compelled to surrender by a soldier of subordinate command with a few motor cars. A five-shilling rebellion on one side ; but a golden rebellion on the other.

It was the belief of Germany that a great European war would lead to the disruption of the British Empire ; and the Kaiser had left no stone unturned to assist in the disruption. The incitement of Turkey to proclaim a Holy War was to raise all British Moslems against the Empire ; and South Africa was to be helped to throw off its miserable and galling shackles by a strong German force just across the border, by cunning efforts to foment rebellion, by promises which, to the thoughtful, added nothing but vengeance to their lot, and, in any case, would have only the value of any other inconvenient scrap of paper.

The German colony of South-West Africa, a territory of some 325,000 square miles, was a convenient base for action against—in favour of South Africa the Germans regarded it—the Union of South Africa. There Germany had collected a well-trained force of about 10,000 mounted infantry and artillery, with 66 machine-gun batteries, and plenty of spare arms for the men who would be so ready to rebel when once provided with the means. The force was quite disproportionate for any pacific object, and its dimensions were not disclosed by German official books before the war.

The railway system of German South-West Africa had an offshoot from the main loop running towards the Orange River, which is the boundary between that colony and the Union of South Africa. On the British side of the frontier there is a railway line leading from Port Nolloth, which has a station, Steinkop, about as far from the Orange River crossing, Raman's Drift, as the German railhead on the other side. But to use this line the British would need to transport troops to Port Nolloth, since the railway lies in the barren north-west corner of the Cape Province, whose railways, having a north-easterly direction, shun this district.

The German colony had, therefore, a distinct advantage for offensive purposes. On both sides of the eastern part of the frontier the country was much the same, mainly a desert land. On the west, the coast-line, stretching about 1,000 miles, had but two ports, one the British settlement, Walvis Bay, the other Luderitz Bay. A third port was growing at Swakopmund, the northern terminus of the railway, which flung its huge loop inland and then round to the coast at Luderitz Bay.

The Union of South Africa at the outbreak of the war had not yet secured as complete a union as the name implied. It is true that, for the most part, the old lines of cleavage were disappearing ; and in their stead those dominant in every modern state were emerging. In place of the division of nations and races the cleavage of classes had become clearer and clearer. But while this is true, it must also be said that the old and bitter race antagonisms still existed and animated a section of the community ; and this section included men of such power as General Hertzog, and of such implacable spirit as De Wet.

These men had a following. They had a wide influence, and once roused might cause trouble. General Botha, Prime Minister since 1909, had indeed worked wonders in the new State. But he and General Smuts, the Minister for War, were men far removed from the narrowness and littleness of De Wet and his sympathisers.

De Wet and those who felt with him still persisted in regarding themselves in a wholly national way. They had no feeling except bitterness and animosity for the Empire. They stood for the preservation of what all true statesmen saw to be



the chief stumbling-block in the way of the development of the Union—the old national lines of cleavage.

When the war broke out, the Governor-General at once cabled to the Imperial Government that the 6,000 Imperial troops might be removed, and the Union Defence Force would undertake the end for which it existed, the defence of South Africa. General Botha went further. "We will do our duty," he telegraphed. Up and down the country meetings were held at which the Dutch expressed their loyalty to the Empire. It is a little regrettable that the Imperial Government was not content with these professions, and did not leave the Union to determine for itself what line its duty and loyalty should take. Instead of this, it was suggested to the Union Government that operations against German South-West Africa were considered of strategic importance, and this was the point upon which the malcontents in the Union seized.

Yet that it was no more than a pretext seems to be certain, since, when on 23rd August the second line of the South African Defence Force was mobilised, General Botha was able to announce unimpeachable grounds for his action. It is true that the Defence Force was designed, as its name implied, for the defence of the Union; yet General Beyers, Commandant-General of the Union troops, himself admitted that, if the territory of the Union were to be violated, it would be the duty of the Defence Force to throw the invaders off Union territory and to pursue them into their own. And when the second line was mobilised, General Botha was able to announce that "a German force is entrenched in kopjes on Union land at this moment." The malcontents had therefore all the logic of the situation against them, though their position in objecting to the use of the Defence Force outside the Union was sound.

On 10th September General Botha, in the Union Assembly, described the steps which the Union Government had taken and carried the majority with them. He said that the Union Government, after careful consideration of the request of the Imperial Government, had decided to comply not only in the interests of the Empire, but also of South Africa. The Labour leader, Mr. Cresswell, who had every cause, in events still fresh in men's minds, to oppose the Government, gave his support, and even suggested that a force should be raised for service in France. If the Imperial Government had been content merely to call for volunteers for such an expeditionary force, it is possible all might have been well. But those who think that all must have been well in such circumstances have to explain away much that has since come to light.

It soon became known that General Beyers had resigned his position as the Commander of the Union Defence Force. Beyers was far the superior of De Wet in education and knowledge of affairs, and there is, therefore, the more difficulty in admitting his plea that he resigned because he felt that the Union Assembly could not by general resolution change the constitution according to which the Defence Force was not to be used outside the Union. The correspondence which took place between him and the War Minister leaves no doubt that such a position was merely a technical pretext. And that it was the thinnest of pretexts is realised when one remembers that the Union had already been entered by the Germans. Indeed, his letter—and he must have known it—contained at least one statement which was false, and at least one by which he stands self-convicted as a traitor and a coward.

"The war will be decided in Europe in any case," he wrote; "so if Germany triumphs and should decide to attack us, then even Great Britain will be unable to

help us . . . the Defence Act does not allow us to go and fight the enemy over the frontier and to light the fire in this way. But should the enemy penetrate into our country it will be our duty to drive him back, and pursue him in his own territory. . . . In the South African War almost all farms, not to mention many towns, were so many Louvains."

The first statement makes him a coward ; the second a traitor, for he must have known that already the enemy had penetrated Union territory ; and the third is virtually a lie, since, in the South African War, farms were forts. The whole nation was fighting, and it was the rule and not the rare exception to be assailed from every house. When the British were not so attacked it was because the farm had been evacuated by all who could attack.

But General Smuts dealt with the situation more trenchantly, and part of his letter deserves record. He reminded General Beyers that Germany had already invaded South Africa. " You forget to mention," he went on, " that since the South African War the British people gave South Africa her entire freedom, under a constitution which makes it possible for us to realise our national ideals along our own lines, and which, for instance, allows you to write with impunity a letter for which you would, without doubt, be liable in the German Empire to the extreme penalty. . . . You speak of duty and honour. My conviction is that the people of South Africa will in these dark days, when the Government, as well as the people of South Africa, are put to the supreme test, have a clearer conception of duty and honour than is to be deduced from your letter and action. For the Dutch-speaking section in particular, I cannot conceive anything more fatal and humiliating than a policy of lip loyalty in fair weather and a policy of neutrality and pro-German sentiment in days of storm and stress."

General Beyers, in a speech made a little later, stated that he had no wish to stir up strife in the country, and that if he was wanted he would fight to the death. There were others who felt as he did, and it was a question how long they could be trusted to keep to his attitude of benevolent neutrality. On 16th September General Delarey, one of Beyers' coterie, was shot by a sentry, who called upon the motor car in which he was riding to stop. A good deal of ill-feeling was caused by this action. But a week later a thrill of emotion ran through the country and, indeed, the Empire by the announcement that General Botha would himself take command of the force to operate against German South-West Africa. Even the *Cologne Gazette* could not let such an event pass without surprise and appropriate comment on the extraordinary situation and Britain's success in turning the man who had been her arch-enemy into her staunch supporter.

Already operations had commenced, the Germans taking the initiative. They had seized a number of frontier posts in the Union territory toward the east. But no attempt was made to follow up these minor operations, and by the end of September the posts had all been retaken. What was of greater importance was that the Rhodesian police had occupied and put under Union administration the long strip, the so-called Caprivi strip, of territory which made a salient into Rhodesia to the Zambesi. The Germans had seized Raman's Drift on the Orange River ; but they were later driven out by a force under Colonel Dawson, operating from Steinkop, and on 18th September the chief port of the German colony, Luderitz Bay, was seized and occupied without resistance.

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But these operations, important in themselves, were completely eclipsed by events in the Union itself. Strange little ebullitions of feeling were breaking out in the northern part of Union territory. Beyers was much in company with De Wet. Meetings were held at which speech was so free as to be distinctly traitorous. Still more significant were the events daily taking place in the north-west of the Cape Province. Here the forces were in command of Lieutenant-Colonel S. G. Maritz, whom General Smuts had raised from the rank of corporal for his skill in raising the Boers in the South African War and for his extraordinary knowledge of this part of the country.

Maritz's behaviour, since the resignation of General Beyers, had been so suspicious that the Government determined to replace him by Colonel Conrad Britz. On 8th October Colonel Britz sent to Maritz, ordering him to come in and report himself. Maritz insolently replied that he would not report to any one, and Britz must come himself and take over his command. Colonel Britz then sent Major Ben Bouwer to take over the command. On his arrival Major Bouwer and his companions were taken prisoner, but he was later sent back with an ultimatum that unless the Government, before 10 o'clock in the morning of 11th October, agreed to allow Maritz to meet General Hertzog, De Wet, Beyers, Kemp, and Müller, so that he might receive instructions from them, he would forthwith attack Colonel Britz's force and invade the Union.

The insolence and assurance of Maritz's demand must not be taken as any evidence that any of the generals he named were cognisant of or in sympathy with his action. All, with the exception of Hertzog, later took part in the much more formidable movement within the Union inaugurated by Beyers and De Wet. But at this moment Hertzog was endeavouring to persuade his comrades to keep the peace, and De Wet and Beyers had not yet openly declared themselves.

Major Bouwer was able to report that Maritz had under him German troops as well as those of part of his commando, and that he held the rank of General commanding the German troops, had guns belonging to the Germans, and had sent those of his commando who refused to join him prisoner into South-West Africa. He had been shown an agreement between the Governor of German South-West Africa and Maritz guaranteeing the independence of the Union as a republic, ceding Walvis Bay and other parts of the Union to the Germans, and undertaking that the Germans would only invade the Union on the invitation of Maritz. He was also shown telegrams and helio messages dating back to the beginning of September. Maritz boasted that he had plenty of money, guns, and rifles from the Germans, and that he would overrun the whole of South Africa.

On 12th October martial law was proclaimed throughout the Union. Many influential Dutchmen declared that Maritz must be mad; but at any rate the Government was not, and the proclamation of martial law showed Maritz what he had to expect. Maritz had his base at Upington on the Orange River, and he hoped to increase his force of between 1,000 and 2,000 by marching south along the Great Fish River. But he was given little rest. Britz, with a force of Imperial Light Horse and a company of Dutch horsemen, rode for Upington, and Maritz's command began to dwindle at once. Many of the rebels were so only in name, having been forced to join Maritz. Parties of them surrendered at once. Others were cut off and taken.

A stubborn engagement took place on the 22nd, when Maritz, with a force of

about 1,000, attacked Keimoes, which lies to the south-west of Upington. There a tiny garrison, outnumbered by over six to one, held out until, later in the day, reinforcements came. Maritz, still bearing south-west, then descended upon Kakamas; but Britz attacked him with such vigour that he had to abandon a great proportion of his stores and ammunition. He was wounded in the engagement, and many of his followers deserted him. He rode for the frontier and, reinforced by Germans at Schuit Drift, was again compelled to fly by Britz's force. In the meantime the other part of his force had been defeated at Calvinia by Colonel van der Venter, and later at Ondersterdoorme. It had lost over 200 men and some guns; and hence, by the end of October, the whole of Maritz's force was practically put out of action.

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Meanwhile a far more sinister and formidable movement had been gathering way. De Wet had been for some time making speeches and committing acts for which he might justifiably have been called to account, but the Government had determined to ignore anything short of clear rebellion. However, on the day before the second section of Maritz's force had been defeated at Calvinia, De Wet had arrested the Government officials at Heilbron; and three days later had held up a troop train at Reitz. By these actions De Wet showed his hand clearly enough. Both places are in the Orange Free State, in which he had great influence, and his method of recruiting, characteristic of the man, was to sjambok any who seemed to hesitate. His cause was helped by the religious fanatic, famed as a prophet, van Rensburg, who saw in Beyers and De Wet the heavenly appointed instruments for the re-establishment of the former republics.

De Wet's rebellion, since it must be left at his door finally, though Beyers joined it, was not to rise to any great lengths. The reasons which combined to keep it within narrow limits were that General Hertzog, who was the spokesman and chief of the Dutch nationalists, was an honourable opponent, and refused to take any part in the rebellion. This was negative. On the positive side must be reckoned the extraordinary prestige of General Botha who, lacking some of the qualities of a great statesman, was yet great enough to hit a happy compromise between the claims of the majority of his Dutch fellow-countrymen and of the British Imperialists. Botha's extraordinary decision and promptitude of action kept the rebellion within controllable bounds. He had announced his intention to take command of the force against German South-West Africa, and his stirring speeches in various parts of the country carried all but the small minority with him. Furthermore, Maritz's treachery had in it something so cynical that even those who had been inclined to sympathise with the rebellion were driven, disgusted, into the loyal camp. His rebellion with German troops, moreover, was a virtual if not an actual invasion of Union territory, which all were bound to repel.

Confronted with actual rebellion Botha again acted with surprising swiftness; and here must be emphasised the extraordinary nobility of the man and his followers. Living side by side with many of the rebels before the South African War, he understood and sympathised with most of their ideals. Driven to make common cause with them in the South African War, he had gained that respect for them which a leader must have for worthy colleagues. Friendships rooted in long years of peaceful and somewhat primitive life had been cemented in the long and arduous campaign of the South African War. Against these very men he and his followers



were now to fight. Some of his followers had to take the field against ties of blood as well as of friendship. Botha, however, showed no hesitation. His grave words when the rebellion had been crushed showed how deeply he had felt the task which honour and fidelity had placed upon his shoulders.

Placing himself at once at the head of the force raised for service against German South-West Africa, he rapidly moved against Beyers, whose treachery was the greater. He was determined, if possible, to prevent the junction of Beyers' force with that of De Wet. The force with him was largely Dutch, raised in primitive fashion by house-to-house call of those who were determined at all costs to be loyal to their word. Beyers was raising the Transvaal, and had settled his headquarters some miles south of Rustenburg. To Rustenburg Botha entrained at once, and in a week's strenuous marching had scattered Beyers' commandoes in all directions.

In the Orange Free State De Wet had proceeded from Reitz to Vrede, where, on 28th October, he ordered before him the magistrate who had some time before fined De Wet five shillings for sjamboking a native. De Wet, almost speechless at the remembrance of this indignity, reminded the magistrate, proceeded to show how "ungodly" the policy of General Botha had been, and so on. De Wet moved off, compulsion only enlisting men in his journey, a fact which prevailed upon the Government to declare that burghers who voluntarily laid down their arms before 21st November should not be molested. The amnesty excluded only those who had taken a prominent part in the rebellion or violated the laws of civilised warfare. On 6th November he defeated a Union commando at Winburg, north-east of Bloemfontein; but one of his sons, Darriel, was killed in the engagement. Two days later, Colonel Manie Botha, a son of the Premier, dispersed a portion of De Wet's force near Kroonstad. On 13th November General Botha took the field in the Orange Free State against De Wet, and coming up with the main body of the rebels at Marguard, about twenty-five miles due east of Winburg, completely routed them. General Botha's force had reached Marguard only after a forced night march, but they so severely handled De Wet's force that 250 prisoners were captured (about one-eighth of the rebel army). Numerous horses, mules, carts, and wagons were taken; several prisoners, including Senator Stuart and the magistrate from Winburg, were released; and Commandant Els of Heilbron and twenty-one others were killed. This battle would probably have ended the rebellion, but that, by some mischance, the orders which should have secured an envelopment by Britz and Colonel Lukin miscarried. General Botha's force pursued the retreating rebels until his wearied horses could go no farther.

De Wet succeeded by this mischance in escaping capture, moved first south, then east and north, and held the railway line between Bloemfontein and Pretoria, a little north of Virginia. Already his following was being thinned out. It had first lost General Chris Müller, who had been captured on 16th November. De Wet was sharply attacked from Kroonstad and forced to go south. The previous day the remnant of Beyers' force had been defeated and driven back towards the Transvaal at Bultfontein.

De Wet was now fleeing for his life. The sharp reverse he had suffered at Marguard had turned the rebel into an outlaw attempting to evade capture. He rode south towards Boshof, and then turned north towards the Transvaal with only twenty-five men. He managed to cross the Vaal River near Bloemhof on 21st November, but found the chase too hot to permit him to hope for safety in the Transvaal. He

came up with a small rebel commando, and rode with it north-west across the Transvaal, crossing the Kimberley-Mafeking railway some twenty miles north of Vryburg, four days after crossing the Vaal. He was now being pursued by a motor brigade, and was allowed little rest. Commandant Britz captured a number of De Wet's followers, and pressed his motor contingent to their utmost through the heavy sandy country. De Wet for fifty miles was unable to rest his horses, and when he reached Waterburg exhausted and unable to go farther, he took refuge in a small farm, only to find his resting-place surrounded on 1st December by a mounted force. He surrendered to Colonel Britz without any attempt at resistance, only remarking he was glad that it was a fellow-countryman who had captured him.

The remainder of the rebel force had been allowed no rest. They were harried continually, and exhaustion and demoralisation began to make their appearance as De Wet was riding for Waterburg. In the Free State General Botha had located the still remaining organised rebels near Reitz, and made arrangements for enveloping them. Heavy rains, however, and subsequent fog delayed the operation until 5th December, when with little trouble 550 were captured. A few days before, Colonel van der Venter had been attacked by the full force at Reitz, and, vastly outnumbered, had lost part of his small command, Commandant Klopers, and about 57 men.

The men were later liberated; and, on the eve of the attack by the Union Force, Klopers and the other officers were set free. During the night he was embarrassed to find himself suddenly accosted by 200 rebels, who wished to surrender. He took their arms and sent them to report to the nearest magistrate. In the decisive action of 5th December the fog enabled Wessel Wessels and Serfontein to escape through the Union lines with about 300 men. Their success, however, was short-lived. Within a few days they were surrounded once more, and Wessel Wessels and N. Serfontein with 1,200 men surrendered.

Meanwhile Beyers, who had raised the flag of rebellion in the Transvaal before De Wet, had met with a tragic fate. Botha's policy in crushing out the rebellion had been to give the rebels no peace. Day and night they were hunted down and surrounded. Under the continual pressure, Beyers had crossed the Vaal into the Free State. Here, however, he was at once compelled to fly by the commando guarding the frontier. With sixty men he attempted, on 7th December, to recross the river. The Vaal was in flood, and in midstream he fell from his horse. He attempted to get back to the left bank, but within 300 yards from the shore he shouted out, "I am done." One of the Union Defence Force called out to him, asking if he was wounded. He replied in Dutch, "I can't swim. This overcoat is hampering my legs." So within sight of help he sank out of sight and was drowned. The rebels kept up a dangerous fire, and effectually prevented any help being given.

On 10th December the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa was able to announce that the rebellion was practically at an end. It was but two months since Maritz had turned traitor, and not six weeks since Beyers had raised the flag in the Transvaal. Of the five leaders of whom Maritz had demanded permission to consult only one was still at large, Kemp, who had joined the Germans in the South-West African colony. Of the others Beyers was dead, De Wet and Müller prisoners, and Hertzog had never taken part in the movement. Indeed, Hertzog it probably was to whom the Government entrusted the task of trying to prevent the outbreak of rebellion in the Free State. There were still a few small bodies of rebels at large,



but they were not sufficient to embarrass seriously the available police forces, and certainly not formidable enough to call for further military operations. Besides Müller and De Wet, Wessel Wessels, the two Serfonteins, and Piet Grobler—these three last, members of the Union Assembly—were prisoners. Day by day other less significant leaders and small bodies of men were coming in, and the total of those captured and surrendered amounted to 7,000. There had been few casualties in the Defence Force, and Botha's generalship had enormously lessened the casualties on the rebel side also. The crushing of the rebellion set free a number of the commands to return to their farms and home life, and also cleared the ground for the operations against German South-West Africa.

A certain romance still clings to the name of De Wet, who met with so inglorious an end. Hooted through the streets of Johannesburg, he was kept prisoner to await formal trial for high treason. Certainly no praise can be too high for the conduct of the operations by Generals Botha and Smuts. They rightly discriminated between Beyers and De Wet, and the former had been first attacked and his force dispersed, before any operations were undertaken against the misguided and ill-balanced fanatic De Wet. The fates of these two men had about them a certain propriety, though one cannot but feel pity for the tragedy of Beyers' end. If he had chosen to support the Government, how different might his fortune have been; what a name he might have won in the field against the Empire's and the Union's enemy across the border. He would have earned an undying fame. As for De Wet, his conduct on this occasion, as in the South African War, was chiefly marked by his supreme capacity for running away. He was still playing this ignominious game, in defiance of the march of events which had brought a new and effective machine against such tactics into the field, some time after two of his sons had surrendered.

This was typical of the lines of cleavage in many places in the Union, and the fidelity of the loyalists was severely called upon when they had to take the field against friends and relatives. In one way this tragic and terrible test may be the fire which will anneal the divergent aims and ideals of the peoples of the Union. British and Dutch fought side by side in this conflict, and General Smuts was not sparing of praise to the British leaders of the motor squadron which ran De Wet to earth. British and Dutch also loyally took the field together later in German South-West Africa. These are things which in the past have healed old differences, and they will probably do so, and for the last time, in South Africa.

Germany had had her hopes for an uprising in South Africa, but it must have seemed very small beer to her. The strangest thing is what a man like Beyers can have hoped to gain by rebellion. It is possible that men like Maritz and De Wet may have thought Germany would give something to them which Britain had withheld, though it is more probable that Maritz's head was turned and De Wet won by the promise of vengeance. But Beyers must have known that the record of Germany was hardly what would commend itself to those who so loved freedom. Hertzog, no doubt, had a surer intuition of German motives, and if he had ever wavered in his loyalty it was not by such fictions he would be persuaded.

The rebellion crushed, the invasion of South-West Africa was speedily resumed, and on 31st December General Botha took command in the field.

III. THE *EMDEN*.

MANY names are made and many are lost in war. Nations, like individuals, tend to beget in peace fictitious characters, which, when put to the ruthless test of war, show for what they are in fact. The world war has been no exception to the rule; and one of the reputations which has faded is that of Germany's invincibility both on sea and land. The great things which the German navy was to accomplish never materialised. They were in fact sedulously reported before the war merely to persuade the German nation that it was gaining value for the sacrifices it made to procure a great navy. When the war broke out such stories had only a spasmodic currency after the first weeks had shown that the British navy was indeed, what it had claimed to be, of almost unchallengeable efficiency. The control of the German navy passed naturally into the hands of naval men, who knew the greatness of the trust which lay in their keeping. While the German navy existed in undiminished strength no landing could be made on the Baltic shores of Germany.

That the German navy lacked neither courage nor efficiency we have seen. The fate of the *Good Hope* showed very clearly that it knew how to improve the occasion in the most approved fashion of naval warfare. The result must not blind us to the fact that in every quality which distinguishes a splendid battle—courage, tactics, gunnery, and so on—the German squadron was at least equal to the British. The battle will live in history. But beyond all the other achievements of the German navy, equal to almost any feat in the naval warfare, while surpassing all in the *ensemble* of qualities which go to make up romantic history, were the exploits of the German cruiser *Emden*.

A protected cruiser of 3,592 tons, the *Emden* was built in 1908 at Dantzic. She had a speed of about 25 knots and mounted ten 4.1 guns. Nothing in this tale of her qualities can account for her romantic history. This depended a good deal upon the real efficiency of her commander, and even more upon the character of the field of her exploits. It is more wonderful that she was caught so quickly than that she remained so long at large. The seas are wide, and a vast number of ships may search and seek for long in vain for a cruiser or two, if their captains know how to use their chances.

The factor which must eventually bring a corsair to book is fuel. She can, with an average amount of luck, readily elude her pursuers, lie hidden in remote harbours on islands out of the beaten track, and leave her cover when the coast is clear and there is work to do, provided the fuel supply holds out. Once this fails the career of the cruiser is over. She may, indeed, escape capture, as did, in fact, the *Karlsruhe* and *Dresden* for months, by lying hidden and useless. But either this stalemate or capture must be the final end of the cruiser when once her fuel supply gives out.

The British public came to know of the *Emden* by her dramatic appearance in the Bay of Bengal on 10th September. To the ordinary man she seemed to come from nowhere. She had, in fact, before the war formed part of the German China squadron. But most people were unaware of the existence of such a squadron. Even to those who knew of the existence and constitution of this squadron the *Emden's* sudden appearance was dramatic. She had escaped from Kiaochau early in August, and had completely disappeared.

During the weeks she lay hidden, doubtless she waited until the arrangements



for her meteoric career were complete. These were elaborate, and must have been costly, far beyond even the very considerable material loss she was able to inflict upon British commerce. Store and fuel ships had to be equipped, and arrangements made for their appearance at the points where they would be necessary. When the arrangements were complete the *Emden* appeared on 10th September in waters which might have been accounted peculiarly a British preserve. In five days she had sunk six British ships and released one with their crews, not far south of Calcutta, in the Bay of Bengal.

The theatre of her exploits had been carefully chosen. The Germans had counted on the disruption of the British Empire on the outbreak of war; and in thoroughly German fashion, did not mean to leave the whole of such an achievement to Providence. India, which had caught the eye and won the envy of the Crown Prince on his tour there, was supposed to simmer with sedition. German agents helped the simmering pot to boil, and the *Emden's* function was to make the pot boil over. She was to hold up to the eyes of the impressionable Easterns the spectacle of an Emperor impotent in the very heart of his rule. And no one can grudge her the admission that she did, in fact, produce a great impression upon the people of India.

Upon Englishmen the effect must have been puzzling to the Germans. Although the vessels destroyed ranged from 3,393 tons to 7,615 tons, the vast majority of the British people thought only of the daring of the commander of the *Emden*, Captain von Müller, and his courtesy to the captured crews. It is true he sank ships in contravention of the prevailing prize law; although by the unconfirmed Declaration of London he was absolved, since he could not take them into port for submission to the Prize Courts without endangering his safety. When the neighbourhood of Calcutta became too warm for him, Captain von Müller steamed off to Rangoon, across the bay. Then, barely a week from sinking his last ship, he appeared in the roadstead before Madras and set two oil tanks there ablaze.

This exploit only occupied her for two hours, and then the *Emden* steamed south, to appear on 29th September at Colombo in Ceylon. This was a week since her bombardment of the oil tanks at Madras, which is not a full day's steaming for a ship of the *Emden's* speed. Where she had been in the meantime will not be known until Captain von Müller lifts the veil. But some skilful manœuvring must have taken place, for it is practically impossible she should have been undiscovered if she had remained anywhere in the neighbourhood of Ceylon. The following day the *Emden* sank four vessels off the west coast of India, and sent the crews ashore on another vessel. She also seized, about this time, the Greek vessel, *Pontoporos*, and used her as a collier.

After this second series of exploits the *Emden* continued her mysterious course, disappearing for almost three weeks. Where she hid herself is again a mystery. To the south of the scene of her recent labours there lies an extraordinary collection of islands (about 500) some 1,000 miles distant. Somewhere in these waters, off the beaten track, she may have taken a breathing space, while the cruisers of Britain, Japan, France, and Russia ploughed the ocean in a vain endeavour to find her.

She seemed almost to have retired, like the *Karlsruhe* and *Dresden* after Admiral Sturdee's victory in December, when once again she showed herself in her characteristic way on 20th October. On this day she appeared about 150 miles to the south-west of the scene of her last raid, sank five more vessels and captured two, one of which she used to carry away the captured crews. All these vessels, with but one

exception, ranged between 3,900 and 7,500 tons. By this time, although the general public continued to regard Captain von Müller with a certain amusement and admiration, commercial circles had begun to complain of the inactivity of the Allied navies. To counteract this the Admiralty, on 23rd October, published a statement



The Route of the *Emden*.

showing the unreasonableness of such a position. It was pointed out that of British ships engaged in foreign trade not 1 per cent. had been sunk, and these had largely been the victims of their own imprudence in neglecting to observe Admiralty instructions. It is characteristic, if not very reasonable, that many British mariners still sailed the seas without giving a thought to the fact that their country was at



war. In Great Britain there is little doubt of the power of the British navy; and, unfortunately, more than a little contempt for the navy of any hostile Power. But it was unreasonable to blame the fleet for not achieving the impossible when their achievement had been so wonderful. Across these very seas where the *Emden* lurked troops had been convoyed in perfect safety in such numbers that one might almost have thought no hostile cruisers still remained at large.

A week after its last appearance the *Emden* was heard of again. This time it was a Japanese vessel that was sunk off Borneo. On the following day, 28th October, she achieved what was probably her most romantic exploit. Penang, an island in the British Strait Settlements, lies some 2,000 miles due east of the spot where the *Emden* sank the five vessels on 20th October. In the roadstead on 28th October lay a Russian cruiser and a small French torpedo boat. The cruiser was only slightly inferior in tonnage, speed, and armament to the *Emden*, and had already done valuable service in conveying troops with the Allied cruisers. The torpedo boat was a vessel of 300 tons.

About two hours before sunrise the *Emden*, disguised with a dummy fourth funnel, passed the guardships lying in the outer roads, and making no reply to their signals steamed at full speed towards the inner roads, where the cruiser and torpedo boat lay. The guardships apparently took her for one of the Allied ships, and to gain the advantage of a further delay the *Emden* hoisted the Japanese flag. Enabled in this way to approach very closely to the cruiser, the *Emden* opened fire, and discharged a torpedo, which exploded under the Russian cruiser's stern. The cruiser at once returned the fire; but before she could effect any damage the *Emden* had fired a second torpedo which sank her. Without any loss of time the *Emden* then ran up the Russian flag, and gaining another slight advantage of delay by this means, was able to approach the torpedo boat and sink her. The use of the flags is worth noticing, in view of the German protest later on against the British using American flags to escape attack. Provided the *Emden* flew her own flag before beginning the attack the ruse was permissible and very shrewd.

But the taking of such risks showed that the commander of the *Emden* was feeling himself near the end of his career. It is no part of the rôle of such a vessel to attack cruisers. A fortnight before the Hamburg-Amerika liner, *Markomania*, and the *Pontoporos*, which had been acting as colliers to the *Emden*, had been sunk and captured by H.M.S. *Yarmouth*, near Sumatra.

Still the *Emden* was able once more to pass into obscurity, until on 9th November she appeared off Keeling Cocos Island, and landed an armed party to dismantle the wireless station and cut the cable. The *Emden* steamed up in the darkness, but before her work could be accomplished the wireless operator was sending the news far and wide that a strange warship was off the entrance to the harbour. Hardly 100 miles away troops were being convoyed across the ocean, and not more than half that distance H.M.S. *Sydney* was steaming with the *Melbourne* and other cruisers. When the wireless message was received at 6.30 A.M. the fate of the *Emden* was practically sealed. It was hardly possible for her to escape, and if she did not, then she must either surrender or go down. The *Sydney*, ordered to deal with her, was speedier and had a longer range and heavier guns. The *Emden* could not live against such a handicap.

At 9.15 the *Sydney*, in command of Captain J. C. T. Glossop, sighted land, and almost immediately the smoke of the *Emden* steaming out against her "at a great

rate." It was reported that when Captain von Müller saw the *Sydney* he said, "If she's the Australian cruiser, I'll sink her"; and the fact that the *Emden* steamed out so rapidly seems to lend colour to the story. Her idea obviously was to get within the *Sydney's* guard, and so destroy the advantage of her superior range. At 9.40 the *Emden* opened fire very accurately and rapidly, so that all the casualties which occurred in the *Sydney* were caused in the first few minutes. But the captain of the *Sydney* was not going to lose his advantage, and kept his distance. Very quickly he shot away the *Emden's* funnel, then the foremast, and then the second and third funnels. All the time the *Sydney* was steaming 25 or 26 knots. With the utmost coolness the cruiser, having the advantage of speed, fought as it wished—now firing with the port guns, now turning and giving her salvoes with the starboard guns. Before the second funnel had gone the *Emden* was on fire aft; and about an hour and a half later she turned to steam for North Keeling Island, where she grounded at 11.20.

Very little damage had been done to the *Sydney* though some ten hits had been received. There were one or two small local fires, quickly extinguished, the after control platform was smashed and the foremast range-finder was shot away. But the state of the *Emden* was indescribable. When she went ashore the *Sydney* steamed off to deal with a merchantman which had been captured by the *Emden*, and had a prize crew on board. Having accounted for this vessel, the *Sydney* returned to find the *Emden* with her colours still flying. Captain Glossop signalled to inquire if the *Emden* surrendered, but could get no satisfactory answer. The German officers taken from the merchantman told the captain that Captain von Müller would never surrender. So Captain Glossop fired once more, but stopped in five minutes, when white flags were shown and the ensign was hauled down.

A boat was sent in to the *Emden* saying that the *Sydney* would return the next morning. The *Sydney* then steamed to Direction Island to see the condition of the wireless station and the cables. It was too late to communicate with the island that night, but early next morning the *Sydney* borrowed a doctor and two assistants and steamed back to the *Emden*. The operation of taking the wounded and prisoners on board was then begun. In the heavy seas the boats found great difficulty in reaching the *Emden*, but by 5 P.M. there had been taken on board 3 officers and 53 men wounded, and 8 officers, 9 warrant officers, and 138 men prisoners. According to Captain von Müller 7 officers and 108 men had been killed, and 1 officer and 3 men died on the *Sydney*.

The *Sydney's* own casualties amounted to 4 killed and 12 wounded, of whom 4 were severely wounded. This was the first entry of Australia into naval warfare, and the conduct of the ship in action, although it had such a large proportion of young hands and people under training, was beyond praise. Quite naturally the result of the action was hailed with enthusiasm in Australia, and, indeed, throughout the Empire.

With Captain von Müller on board the *Emden* was Prince Joseph of Hohenzollern. Both were taken prisoner, but by command of the Admiralty were not deprived of their swords. The whole of the survivors were accorded all the honours of war, and it is quite certain that, even in commercial circles, where the news of the destruction of the *Emden* was heard with a sigh of relief, there was not absent a slight feeling of regret that a captain who had shown himself so courteous, daring, and resourceful should at length be compelled to give in. In its short career, just two months, the



*Emden* had caused damage assessed at about £2,250,000. She had undoubtedly produced an impression on the peoples of India by the apparent ease with which the might of the British Empire could be defied. It was a just retribution that the *Sydney*, with all its traditions to make, which the *Emden* despised because of her newness and the youth and inexperience of her crew, should with such extraordinary ease reduce her to scrap-iron.

The *Emden* was caught and destroyed little over a week after the ill-fated action of the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* off Chile. On this same day the German cruiser, *Geier* was interned, according to the provisions of international law, at Honolulu. Another German cruiser was accounted for in the Admiralty report of the destruction of the *Emden*.

The *Königsberg* had been last heard of on 19th September, when she steamed into Zanzibar and sank the much out-ranged *Pegasus*. This most risky proceeding had its natural effect. The Admiralty arranged at once for a concentration of fast cruisers in East African waters, which began a thorough search in combination. There is no need to labour the efficiency of the British navy, and hence the fact that it took some six weeks to run the hunted cruiser to earth is a very clear proof of the difficulties which patrols labour under, and the advantages of isolated raiding cruisers on the high seas.

On 30th October H.M.S. *Chatham*, in command of Captain Drury-Lowe, discovered the *Königsberg* hiding about six miles up the Rufiji River in very shallow water, off Mafia Island, German East Africa. It is wonderful that in such circumstances she should have been discovered. She was a cruiser of shallower draught than the *Chatham*, and could therefore ascend the river with impunity. That she intended to remain there for some time at least is clear from the fact that part of the crew was landed and entrenched on the banks of the river. The *Chatham* could not reach the *Königsberg*, so she made it impossible for the German cruiser to come out again. Colliers were sunk in the only navigable channel, and then the *Chatham* bombarded both the entrenchments and the ship, and left her imprisoned and harmless.

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These steps cleared the whole range of the Indian Ocean, and left at large only the cruisers which had attacked and sunk the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* off the coast of Chile. Yet another of the limitations of sea power besides the periodic reappearances of these sea-raiders had been demonstrated about this time by a significant happening in the North Sea. On 3rd November a German cruiser squadron appeared off Yarmouth and fired a number of rounds at the "forts" of Yarmouth and Lowestoft. It was the day after the fatal battle off Coronel, when the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* were sunk, and the Germans intended to press the lesson home. They found there on patrol the coastguard gunboat *Halcyon*, and fired a hundred shots at her, securing two hits. The little gunboat at once sent the news round, and the Germans, not wishing to see the result, steamed off.

This raid, which presumably was meant to throw England or, at any rate, the east coast into a panic, failed of its effect. It is difficult to see how it could have done otherwise under the circumstances. A cruiser squadron which can only hit a gunboat twice in a hundred attempts is more likely to cause jubilation to the enemy. The panic, indeed, seems to have been all on the German side. That surely can be the only excuse for securing but 2 per cent. hits, and for failure to hit even the shore more frequently.

The sequel was the most disastrous part of the expedition. As the cruisers steamed away, they dropped mines astern, and the submarine D5, which had set out in pursuit, struck one and was destroyed. This does not complete the story, for the German cruiser *Yorck* on its journey home lost its way in the mist near Wilhelms-haven, struck, according to the German account, one of the German mines, and was lost. This was a much more material loss than that of the British submarine, as the Germans could not afford to lose cruisers, and the *Yorck* was a more powerful vessel than the *Good Hope*. The commander of the *Yorck* was subsequently court-martialed and sentenced to a term of imprisonment in a fortress. This seems to support the German contention that it was one of their own mines she struck, although the squadron had to steam through a British minefield both going and returning.

For Germany the raid was an almost complete failure. For a number of years the German Naval Staff had set themselves to deal with the problem of fighting against a superior navy, and their plans were based on the assumption that in one way or another they could wear down the British superiority, or so change the Admiralty dispositions that they, with their full force, might fall upon a British force little, if at all, superior. Panic was their weapon for changing the naval dispositions as it was also for preventing the sending of fresh troops to the Continent. And numerous expedients had been designed to weaken the naval power of Britain.

Strategy and tactics had been shaped to the one end. Much was hoped from the submarines, much from mines, and much also from the type of cruiser and battle cruiser they had built. These, from the *Blücher* to the *Goeben*, including the *Von der Tann*, the *Moltke*, and the *Seydlitz*, were all more heavily gunned astern. The *Blücher* could bring six large guns to bear astern; the *Goeben* eight, as against six ahead. They were in fact built and expressly designed for this function, to fight more terrifically as they ran away. It was not their business to fight ahead, though they could do that too. They were to draw a superior force into battle, run away at top speed, and lure the enemy fleet into an area mined and frequented by submarines.

This was one purpose of the raid upon Yarmouth. It was hoped that a British squadron would come out. The Germans would set off at their highest speed, dropping mines as they went, and lead the innocent enemy into a deadly minefield. If attacked they could give a very good account of themselves as they steamed off. When the German destroyers, spread north and south, came into touch with the British squadron, they informed Rear-Admiral Funke, and he at once steamed off. He steamed away into a mist which saved him from the necessity of fighting. The *Yorck* was the sole victim of the minefield, and of her crew of 630, 177 were lost.

The raid caused jubilation in Germany. The fortifications of Yarmouth, which existed and were destroyed in the German mind alone, produced among the civil population the requisite assurance, which became periodically necessary, that the fleet upon which they had spent so much money could achieve something. The German Admiralty must have recognised that on a balance of results the gain was all on the British side. The greatest effect it achieved was to demonstrate to the people of Great Britain that even British naval supremacy left, perforce, here and there a loophole for raids; but this was far from the panic the Germans hoped to produce. Men and women saw the affair in the correct light. It did not mean that the Germans could invade Britain. Neither did it mean that Germany had wrested the trident from the hands of Britain. It simply demonstrated that the British



patrolling squadrons could not be everywhere at the same time. But this did not shake public confidence in the dispositions of the Admiralty, and it was realised that though such expeditions might be repeated, on one occasion they would be caught and then the result was assured.

If the public had known the real inferiority of the Grand Fleet in actual destructive power as compared with the High Seas Fleet they would have been surprised that the raids were not more frequent.

#### IV. THE SIEGE OF TSINGTAU.

WE have already seen how the Japanese entered the war, and in treating of the siege and fall of Tsingtau, which was their greatest, but by no means their only achievement, it is necessary to discuss the reasons of their taking the sword. It must never be forgotten that the action was a very brave one. Indeed, few actions stand out in the history of the war as stamped with so much cool courage. Japan is the ally of Great Britain, and the object of the alliance is the maintenance of peace in Eastern Asia, the preservation of the integrity of China, and the maintenance of equal opportunities for all countries in China, and of territorial rights in Eastern Asia.

If called upon, therefore, Japan could hardly deny that her help was necessary under the terms of the alliance. Germany had established a fortified base of great strength in the territory of Kiaochau, which she had leased from China. Several other warships were at large in Eastern waters and could very materially menace and disturb the peace of Eastern Asia if allowed the use of so powerful a base.

But when Great Britain, not daring to detach from home waters a force sufficient for the reduction of Kiaochau, called upon Japan for help in this operation, it needed no little courage to be faithful to the terms of the alliance. Germany was over-running Belgium preparatory to advancing upon Paris, when Japan, agreeing at once to give help, delivered her ultimatum to Germany; and the declaration of war was made when Namur had fallen, Charleroi had been taken, and the British were attempting to hold up the overwhelming wave of Kluck's army at Mons. Suppose Germany were to win. Japan's navy had been allowed to grow weak. If Germany, victorious over Europe, should send her navy to the Pacific Japan might find herself forced to fight for her existence. Nevertheless, there was no wavering. Japan declared war, and in thoroughly characteristic fashion began operations.

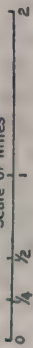
The territory of Kiaochau lies at the southern base of the Shantung peninsula, and is therefore on the western boundary of the Yellow Sea, whose eastern boundary is Korea. It is therefore very close to Japanese territory. Within the territory stands the strong fortress Tsingtau, and the town Kiaochau lies some twenty miles distant outside the leased territory, but within the German sphere of influence. As Japan did not expect Germany to comply with the terms of her ultimatum and evacuate Kiaochau, she occupied several adjacent islands on 19th August, and prepared them methodically as an advanced base.

After the declaration of war Japan, always in a high state of military preparation and with sufficient naval force to carry out the required operation, began the systematic sweeping of the approaches to Tsingtau for the mines which had been laid down. This was necessary, for the Japanese navy was to assist. The Japanese



# TSING-TAU AND ENVIRONS

Scale of Miles





besieging force was landed on 2nd September at Lungkow. It consisted of infantry, a siege artillery corps, and two heavy artillery regiments and two battalions engineers, railway guard troops, a marine artillery detachment, and a flying corps detachment—in all just under 23,000 officers and men. The whole was under the command of Lieutenant-General Kamio, to whom Brigadier-General Barnardiston was naturally subordinate when he landed with the British detachment on 23rd September. The British force consisted of the South Wales Borderers and half a battalion of the 36th Sikhs, some 1,260 officers and men in all from the British forces in North China.

For ten days after the Japanese landing heavy rains created about Tsingtau a flooded area, which effectually prevented any advance. But the besieged were not allowed to slumber during the cessation of hostilities on land. From the sea a bombardment was kept up, and aeroplanes and seaplanes did good work. The Japanese marched across the peninsula from Lungkow, and on 13th September Kiaochau station, on the railway joining that town and Tsingtau, was taken. During the next few days the Japanese made good their position, while constantly visiting by aeroplane the ships in the harbour and the forts and barracks. The German aeroplanes' attempt at reprisal on the Japanese ships took place by night, but they were met by the mysterious disappearance of the fleet. On 26th September the Japanese were at Tsimo, and on the following day the Japanese had pressed forward sufficiently to carry by assault a high position within eight miles of the fortress. The next day they drew their line closer about the fortress. The achievement was not carried out without much resistance and hard fighting. The German ships in the harbour attempted to take the Japanese in the flank, but they were met by so heavy and accurate a bombardment from aeroplanes that they had to desist and retire.

A further advance on 29th September gave them a number of German field-guns, and on the following day they sank a destroyer. A vigorous German counter-attack was launched on this day, but it caused so little anxiety and produced so few casualties that the Japanese commander pressed more strongly. On 3rd October the Tsingtau barracks were reduced to ruins, and the siege guns put the guns on Iltis Hill out of action. A few days later a stroke of capital importance was made in the capture of the fortified height, Prince Heinrich Hill. Well entrenched and carefully fortified, it should have held out longer. Indeed, since its possession gave a point from which the Tsingtau defences were dominated, the ease with which it was captured must have caused General Kamio to reflect. Nor were the losses inflicted on the Japanese at all commensurate with so great a loss. The height was skilfully bombarded by the heavy siege guns, which about this time were causing some surprise to the Germans and Austrians in Poland and Galicia. Meanwhile, the sappers crept ever closer to the doomed fortress. On 15th October, non-combatants, invited to leave, were provided with safe-conducts.

On 19th October the Kaiser and Iltis forts, after three days' heavy bombardment by the fleet, assisted by aeroplanes and siege artillery, were reduced to little more than ruins; but the Japanese had the misfortune to lose by a mine explosion the cruiser *Takachiho*. This was the most important loss during the whole operations, since apart from the cruiser itself nearly the whole of the crew was lost. On the last day of the month, the birthday of the Emperor of Japan, a new and extremely heavy bombardment was opened, and all the forts but two were put almost completely out of action. It is reported that the British battleship *Triumph*, on 1st November, won great renown by putting out of action the Bismarck Hill forts with

seven shots. This was probably the reason for its selection for the attack on the Dardanelles fortifications. One fort only was now in active operation against the Allies. Two days later 25 guns and over 800 prisoners fell into their hands. Little by little the German fortress, harbour, and personnel were being destroyed. A floating dock had sunk, and an Austrian cruiser had also disappeared.

On 6th November the general assault from the land side began. The ground having been carefully prepared by over two months' operations, General Kamio felt that it was time to press things to a conclusion. The guns bombarded the fortress both day and night. By a little after midnight the infantry had carried the central section of the inner line of defence. Some hours later batteries east, west, and north were captured, and the men waited for dawn to rush the final positions. But about 6 A.M. white flags were run up and the terms of surrender had been arranged. The Japanese commander demanded unconditional surrender, and the German governor, unable to hold out, had perforce to agree.

The governor, with 200 officers and 3,841 non-commissioned officers and men, became prisoners of war. They were accorded the honours of war, and on arrival later in Japan the officers were allowed to keep their swords. On 16th November the Allied troops took over the formal occupation of Tsingtau. It was only then that the extraordinary accuracy and destructiveness of the Japanese fire was realised. Forts, platforms, guns, redoubts were all found reduced to ruins.

During the operations the Japanese casualties amounted to 236 killed and 1,282 wounded. The British force lost only 12 killed and 61 wounded; and, as they were not in the final operation, the losses are fairly proportioned to the magnitude of the forces operating. The arrival of the British commander in Tokyo was the signal for an extraordinary outburst of popular enthusiasm. One might have thought that the hero of the siege was arriving instead of the commander of an extremely small percentage of the troops. The real significance of the welcome he received was far otherwise. His visit to Japan was in effect an outward and public recognition of the British indebtedness to the fidelity, skill, and courage of her ally. It was an outward and public announcement that the British had been proud to act merely as co-operators with a gallant ally, who was quite competent to conduct a war against any first-class nation. And it is probably true that the people of Japan recognised the visit in this light, and the welcome was significant of their appreciation. The Emperor conferred the Order of the Rising Sun, second class, upon General Barnardiston, and orders upon two of his officers.

The importance of the operation is not easily overrated. Kiaochau once destroyed, the enemy lost his base in the Pacific, and it became a mere matter of time and good luck to wipe out all his cruisers. The base clearly had to be destroyed, or British and Allied commerce could never have been continued in peace and security. The entry of Japan into the war secured this. But it did more. It gave an example of fidelity to its bond, and what, for want of a better word, may be called *savoir faire* to the whole world. While Germany was urging in her enlightened Kultur that all things were subject to necessity, Japan kept faithfully to her bond, and showed a promptitude, whole-heartedness, and conspicuous prudence and humanity in fulfilling it that were not without their influence in a world which had begun to wonder if cynicism and brutal ruthlessness were not the guiding principles of all nations, if not indeed the best principles.



## V. ADMIRAL CRADOCK AVENGED: THE BATTLE OF THE FALKLANDS.

THE action in which Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock engaged superior forces off Coronel, while it caused no panic in Great Britain nor anything approaching it, produced a great impression. The details of the conditions in which it was fought became known only by degrees, and it was not comforting to think of gallant men out-gunned, out-manceuvred, and out-fought, perishing in the dark while the victors stretched out no hand to save. This represents the case so far as it was known in Britain, and it is undoubtedly a significant fact that in every engagement in which the British were successful they managed to save some of the crew of the sunk ships, while no German ship in the first six months of the war saved a single British sailor. The squadron of Admiral Cradock had been so thoroughly beaten that even British prestige called for a counter-stroke, apart from the fact that a German squadron could not be allowed to remain at large. There can be little doubt that, while people in the United States saw things in true perspective, the republics of South America were much impressed by the German victory; and it was desirable that things should be set right with as little delay as possible.

Lord Fisher, the designer of the Dreadnought and the inventor of the naval policy which expressed itself in the type known as the battle cruiser, had just returned to the Admiralty in the place of Prince Louis of Battenberg, who, in the face of cruel rumours, had felt it his duty to resign. Without any ostentation and without any delay Lord Fisher prepared the counter-stroke, appropriately enough to be delivered by the type he had evolved. The reasons for such a choice scarcely need elaboration. There must be no mistake about the second battle, and neither must there be any serious damage which might detain cruisers so far from the main area of the sea war. The battle cruiser alone, out-steaming and out-gunning Admiral von Spee's fleet, could assure inevitable success and at the minimum cost. It required about a month to redress the distribution of ships in such distant seas, so Sir Doveton Sturdee, the Vice-Admiral, who had been at the Admiralty acting as Chief of Staff since the beginning of the war, the very man who might have been held responsible for the arrangement of ships which had proved so disastrous, at once hoisted his flag on the *Invincible*, which had already appeared in the Battle of the Bight of Heligoland, and steamed off to the south.

The *Inflexible*, another battle cruiser, joined him from the Mediterranean. They set off at high speed for their destination, some 7,000 miles or so away, in the utmost secrecy. It was essential that no rumour should leak out, or the German ships, forewarned, would not wait to meet the formidable battle cruisers. Absolute secrecy was preserved, so that until long after the battle occurred the composition of the squadron was quite unknown. It was this complete secrecy which enabled the German official wireless to report that there were *thirty-eight* cruisers in the victorious fleet. As the battle cruisers steamed south they picked up in the Atlantic the warships *Cornwall*, *Kent*, *Bristol*, and *Carnarvon*.

At Stanley, in the Falkland Islands, for which the squadron was making, the old battleship *Canopus*, which had been too slow to save the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, with the *Glasgow*, the survivor of the action, had gathered to defend the wireless station and coal and oil stores. The Falkland Islands naturally attracted

German desires. There lay large supplies of these commodities which were so valuable to the German squadron. The southernmost of British colonies, it had an important wireless station. This destroyed, the German ships would be freer to prey upon merchant shipping ; and the seizure of a British colony would enhance their already great prestige.

There was considerable nervousness in the Falklands. Even before the battle off Coronel the code books had been buried nightly and dug up in the morning, and schemes had been devised for the plan of battle should an attack be made. The islands were only a week's steaming from Coronel, and the *Canopus* and *Glasgow* arrived at Stanley on 8th November and coaled. The excitement became greater on seeing the *Glasgow* with the nine-foot hole through its side. The ships proposed to stay for a short time, but were ordered by wireless to go to Monte Video. The port was then left defenceless again, until the *Canopus* returned. Off Monte Video she had been ordered to return and defend the port.

The port was much relieved to have some sort of defence once more, and such was the state of things when, on the morning of 7th December, Admiral Sturdee steamed into the harbour with the small fleet he had collected on his journey. There was great excitement and rejoicing. Officers and crews came ashore. Coaling and buying of stores were begun, and the admiral determined to stay a few days before setting out on what might prove to be a long voyage in pursuit of the German cruisers. Meanwhile events were playing into the hands of the British. The Pacific was becoming too hot for Admiral von Spee. Japanese squadrons were sweeping down from the north. The Australian fleet was approaching from the west. He might have eluded either, though the risks were too great to run ; and it was not his rôle to accept needless or avoidable risks. A course which might have seemed to offer advantages was to steam into the Atlantic and harry British commerce there. If his cruisers had scattered they could have wrought much damage for a considerable time among the shipping. It seems certain that the German admiral had made up his mind to seize the Falklands, either to convert them into a convenient base or, at any rate, to rase the wireless station and seize the stores. So far as he knew the *Canopus* was the most formidable ship he would have to meet, and he did not greatly fear the old guns she mounted, though they were 12-inch. Thus it was that, at seven o'clock in the morning following his arrival, Admiral Sturdee heard that his prey was actually approaching.

Admiral Sturdee could never have known or even hoped for such an occurrence. He had arrived but the day before from a 7,000-mile journey, and had not yet been twenty-four hours in port. Needless to say Admiral von Spee had no knowledge of what ships lay waiting to receive him. The deliberation of the British admiral is illustrated by the remark he is reported to have made when he was informed of the presence of the cruisers by a lieutenant in his pyjamas, " Well, you had better go and get dressed, and we'll see about it later." The five German ships advanced, the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* leading, and the *Nürnberg*, *Leipzig*, and *Dresden* following. Two German colliers and the converted liner, *Prince Eitel Fritz*, lay farther off. As the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* drew nearer their guns were laid on the wireless station, and to save it the *Canopus* fired over the low neck of land at a range of about 11,000 yards. The two German cruisers at once moved out of range of the *Canopus* and manœuvred back to concentrate their fire on it.

There was a show of indecision and inactivity on the part of the British while



the cruisers finished coaling. The men were ordered to breakfast as the ships got up steam. At 9.45 the squadron weighed anchor and proceeded out of harbour, the ships being in the following order: the *Carnarvon*, *Inflexible*, *Invincible*, and *Cornwall*. The *Glasgow* and *Kent* were already acting as scouts. It seems clear that a little before this time the German admiral had recognised the strength of the squadron against him, for he steamed off to the south-east. In the harbour still lay the cruiser *Bristol*, which had not been able to raise steam in time. Orders were given to the ships to follow the Germans. It was a gloriously clear day. "The sea was calm, with a bright sun, a clear sky, and a light breeze from the north-west." After a chase of nearly an hour, during which the battle cruisers had inevitably passed ahead, the speed was slowed down to allow the squadron to concentrate. Otherwise, Admiral Sturdee might have found himself fighting alone against the five German ships.



Battle of the Falkland Islands, 8th December.

At 12.47 the order to "open fire" was given, and at a range of nearly ten miles the shells began to fall about one of the German ships. It was a light cruiser, and the handicap of fighting under such odds without the possibility of striking a blow in return determined the German admiral to divide his forces. Accordingly the *Leipzig*, the *Nürnberg*, and the *Dresden* turned away towards the south-west, and the *Kent*, *Glasgow*, and *Cornwall* were ordered to deal with them. The *Invincible* and *Inflexible* then increased speed and turned their fire upon the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. This was a little after one o'clock, and the German admiral had become convinced of the impossibility of escape, and had resolved to give battle under more favourable conditions.

He turned broadside on, and the four cruisers for some time steamed a parallel course towards the south-east. This gave Admiral von Spee as much advantage as he could hope for, since by fighting broadside on he offered a smaller mark to his foe. The whole difficulty of firing is to arrange the elevation of the guns so

accurately that the shells will just fall on the enemy vessel. When a vessel fights end on, that is to say, in a running away battle, the shells of the enemy have the whole length of the ship as a mark. If the shell does not pitch on the stern it may fall amidships or in the bow. In a broadside action, on the other hand, the shells have only the width of the ship as a mark. The *Scharnhörs*t was the crack firing ship of the German navy. She held the gunnery records, and it was clear that such advantage as that might mean would be best applied if the conditions of firing for the battle cruisers were made as difficult as possible.

The Germans were also manœuvring to get as close to the battle cruisers as possible, in order that the full broadside fire might be available. Admiral Sturdee, naturally, would not give up the advantage he possessed in longer range; and he increased the distance again. At the range at which Admiral Sturdee chose to fight the German guns were quite as powerless as the guns of Admiral Cradock's ships had been in the battle off Coronel. At one point, when the range had been increased, the Germans seized the opportunity to get out of range altogether; but after a short chase of half an hour they were caught again, and at 2.45 firing was opened again. The *Scharnhörs*t, under the fire of the flagship, was on fire at about 3 o'clock and some of the guns were out of action. The *Gneisenau*, attacked by the *Inflexible*, was also in a bad way. At about 3.30 the *Invincible* seems to have had the *Scharnhörs*t at her mercy. One shell tore out her crane and pitched it into the sea. Another smashed her third funnel to atoms. A little later the bridge was blown up. The doomed cruiser turned to bring the guns of her starboard side into action. She was invited to surrender but refused. Huge holes appeared in her side and dull red flames could be seen through them.

At 4.4 the *Scharnhörs*t suddenly listed, and in thirteen minutes disappeared, her flag flying to the end. So, after the extraordinary spectacle of the powerful propellers lashing the surface water into foam and then whirling in the air, she sank with the German admiral and all souls on board. None could be saved, as the *Gneisenau* was still fighting and endeavouring to slip away. For nearly two hours she came under the fire of the two battle cruisers. At 5.8 the forward funnel was knocked out. Her turrets were beaten to dust, her guns torn out, and her decks had become a shambles. At 5.15 she managed to hit the *Invincible*. The day was drawing in. The visibility had much changed, and it was not so easy to aim. At 5.30 the *Gneisenau* had a heavy list. Steam and smoke almost shrouded her. "Cease fire" was ordered by Admiral Sturdee, but before it was hoisted the doomed ship had reopened fire with a single gun.

At 6 P.M. she heeled over suddenly and then capsized. The men had crowded on to the side before she sank, and many were drawn down in the suction as she sank. But the *Invincible*, *Inflexible*, and *Cornwall* steamed up and rescued as many men from the water as they could. About two hundred were taken from the water, including the captain. Some of the men when taken on board were found to be already dead. Others were distraught and tried to prevent themselves being saved.

The losses of the British were very slight indeed. On the *Invincible*, a commander was slightly wounded. On the *Inflexible*, one man was killed and three wounded. Nor were the ships much damaged. This, as has been already pointed out, is the characteristic of modern naval warfare. When ships of superior gun power meet those inferior in that particular, unless the weaker can escape they can



be sunk without any damage to the stronger. The action, from start to finish, had occupied five hours, and at the end the guns were almost red hot.

Meanwhile other and more dramatic encounters had taken place. When the *Leipzig* turned away with the *Nürnberg* and *Dresden*, the *Glasgow*, *Kent*, and *Cornwall* had been sent to deal with them. The *Glasgow*, which had survived the action off Coronel, thus found herself once more *vis-à-vis* with her former enemies, the *Leipzig* and *Dresden*. The former had severely punished the British vessel without receiving any damage in return. In the chase of the German cruisers the *Glasgow* got well ahead, and about 3 o'clock was exchanging shots with the *Leipzig* at a range of about seven miles. Her armament was superior to that of her opponent, for besides the ten 4-inch guns, which, like the *Leipzig*, she carried, she had also two 6-inch guns. The *Glasgow* manœuvred so as to allow the slower *Cornwall* to take part. At 4.17 the *Leipzig* was under fire of both the *Glasgow* and the *Cornwall*. In three hours the German ship had been hopelessly battered and was burning. An hour later and she began to list, and turned over; and at 9 P.M. she disappeared. Seven officers and sixty-eight men were saved. It seems that as the British ships were waiting for her to haul down her flag or to sink, so that they might rescue survivors, the Germans were waiting on board for their rescuers, unable to get to their flag for the fire.

The slow cruiser *Kent* was ordered at 3.36 to engage the *Nürnberg*. She could only steam twenty-one knots to twenty-five of her opponent. The stokers, by stupendous efforts, contrived to get another knot out of her; but when this was achieved it was found that the coal supply was giving out. Little by little nearly all the wood found its way to the furnaces in the endeavour to keep up the steam pressure. At 5 o'clock the *Kent* had come within range and opened fire. Darkness was coming on; the odds in favour of the *Kent* could not be preserved if she wished to sink her opponent. It was her correct tactics to keep out of range and batter the *Nürnberg*; but the darkness made it difficult to see at such a distance. So she went closer in, thus inevitably giving the *Nürnberg* power to hurt her. In an hour and a half after opening fire the *Kent* had so far beaten the *Nürnberg* that she was on fire and had ceased firing. The *Kent* steamed closer in and prepared to save the crew when the flag was struck.

It was about this time that a shot nearly wrecked the *Kent*. It fell near a heap of ammunition, setting a casement on fire. The flames ran towards the ammunition. At this point, Sergeant Mayes, with great heroism, ran through the fire, hurled a charge of cordite into the sea and turned a hose upon the ammunition. His action almost certainly saved the cruiser. At 7.27 the *Nürnberg* sank. The striking of her flag had, on the first occasion, it is said, been a trick. When the *Kent* approached, by reason of it, the flag was rehoisted and a terrific fire was poured into the cruiser, which killed four and wounded twelve. The flag was hauled down finally later, though, as the ship sank, a group of men were seen waving an ensign.

The chief blot on the engagement was the escape of the *Dresden*. The *Glasgow* was the only cruiser with sufficient speed to have engaged her, but she had to engage the *Leipzig* for over an hour before the *Cornwall* or *Kent* could come up. While she was so engaged the *Dresden* slipped away. The weather had changed slightly as the afternoon wore on. The sky became overcast, so that when the *Glasgow* could be spared from her struggle with the *Nürnberg* all hope of catching the *Dresden* had passed.

Another action had also been carried out during the greater battle. At 11.47 in the morning a wireless message had been received from the *Bristol*, then in harbour coaling, that three enemy ships had appeared, probably transports or colliers. Admiral Sturdee at once gave orders to the *Bristol* to take the *Macedonia* and destroy the ships. They proved to be two colliers and a fast armed transport. The two colliers were destroyed, but the transport escaped owing to its superior speed.

By Thursday, the 10th, all the engaged cruisers had returned. The *Kent* had got completely out of sight in the battle, and it was feared had been lost; but she steamed in on the Wednesday. The action had occupied some twelve hours from start to finish. Admiral Sturdee had acted with great coolness and caution. Perhaps he may be criticised on those grounds. With the force at his disposal it seems hardly excusable that the *Dresden* should have been allowed to escape. It is also extraordinary that he should not have opened fire until noon. In one of the private accounts of the battle published he is stated to have ordered that the men should have dinner first and have time for a smoke afterwards. The idea presumably was that he should not engage while the men were excited. A most vivid account, written by a midshipman, represents the writer, at any rate, as not having his meals in that orderly fashion. "At 11.15 I managed to get some bread and cheese to eat, and then ran back to the turret," it says. All accounts agree that the men fought gallantly.

The results of this engagement completely justified Lord Fisher's policy, and enabled Admiral Sturdee to redress the naval situation for which, as Chief of Staff, he is to be held at least partly responsible. The old *Canopus* proved valueless in the battle as she had done before. She was of no use to Admiral Sturdee, as she had been of none to Admiral Cradock. The Battle of the Falklands left but one cruiser at large, the *Dresden*. The *Karlsruhe* was no more, though this was not known for some time. She had not been heard of, but it was not till a little later that it was announced that she was no longer afloat. Her fate was left to surmise. With the sinking of the cruisers the battle cruisers could return home, and the *Dresden* left to the care of one or two light cruisers. With no base and no help she was bound to be run to earth sooner or later, and this happened when, on 14th March, she was sunk in Chilean territorial waters. The precise facts were not known for some time, and the British Government made a prompt provisional apology.

The victory, further, restored British prestige in American waters, and gave a complete immunity to the Falkland Islands. Admiral Sturdee as secretly steamed back as he had gone out. He appeared in England one day, and then disappeared once more into the mists of Whitehall. He had shown himself a capable commander, and caution is not a bad trait in one upon whom much responsibility rests. He had accomplished what he set out to do. There was no longer any threat to commerce in the Pacific. With the sinking of the *Dresden* all the cruisers which had been held up in running down the German raiders were set free for work of higher import.



## VI. THE THIRD ADVANCE AGAINST SERVIA.

TOWARDS the end of October things were looking sufficiently black for the Teutonic Powers to call for some new diversion. Russia was sweeping the whole line of the Germans and Austrians towards the west ; the Germans had failed to break the British lines in the West about Ypres ; and a fear was growing in the minds of the German Staff that they were being reduced to the defensive. Such a position was not only wholly abhorrent to the German military tradition ; it was realised that it was also perilous to the German safety, since time fought as surely against them as it fought for the Allies. Under the pressure of such considerations the Germans who controlled the destinies of the Teutonic allies determined to clear Serbia. If they could achieve their purpose they would have advanced a considerable step towards linking up with Turkey. Heretofore the Austrians had taken, as their rule, not to advance too far into the treacherous country of their active and implacable enemy. On their two previous attacks against Serbia the Austro-Hungarian force had attempted to do little more than hold the open country which lay south of the Save and Danube, and east of the Lower Drina. But Serbia could not be reduced by such handling, and unless the country could be reduced or, at any rate, so undeniably beaten that the Austrians could penetrate within reasonable distance of the Eastern frontiers, the political results of her action would not be realised.

To the east of Serbia lay Rumania and Bulgaria, two Powers who had so far refused to be lured into the conflict. East of Bulgaria lay Turkey, now about to range herself on the side of the Teutonic allies. If a victorious force could sweep through Serbia up to the Rumanian and Bulgarian frontiers, might that not be sufficient to persuade the two States to help the victor ? And if Bulgaria alone joined, the Austro-Germans would have control of the whole route to Constantinople. They might even influence Italy. They would have realised the dream of the Berlin diplomatists.

The details of the scheme are not clear. But its character was such as would appeal to the sanguine German temperament ; and it was resolved to undertake seriously the conquest of Serbia. Some 300,000 men, under General Potiorek, were to be allocated to the task. Well-equipped in every way, well-supported by the Austrian railway system, their chances of success seemed very rosy as compared with those of the small enemy who had already twice achieved the impossible. Serbia at this moment certainly encouraged attack. They had not more than 200,000 men, and the Austrians knew from private sources of information that the Serbs had consumed almost all their supplies of ammunition. They had entered the war in August very ill-equipped. Now, however, the use and wastage of a few months had reduced them to that condition which it is the object of an enemy to achieve ; they were not far removed from being defenceless.

In the first days of November the Austrians crossed the Save and Drina, and with little difficulty took possession of all the open country which lines their banks. The Serbs had no chance in an encounter on such a field, and they could do nothing more than resist the advance and retire before it. Belgrade and Shabatz were taken and occupied, and the Austrians advanced to Valievo. By the end of the second week of November there was no longer an enemy in the field. The Serbs had retired to the mountains which threw a natural barrier of great strength across their territory.

Marshal Putnik, Chief of Staff to Prince Alexander of Servia, with a perfect knowledge of his country, had chosen to retire upon its natural defences. The Austrians, however, seemed to think that the future of their campaign in Servia would be as the past, for presumably they were consulted before the German Staff drew off nearly half the force engaged in Servia.

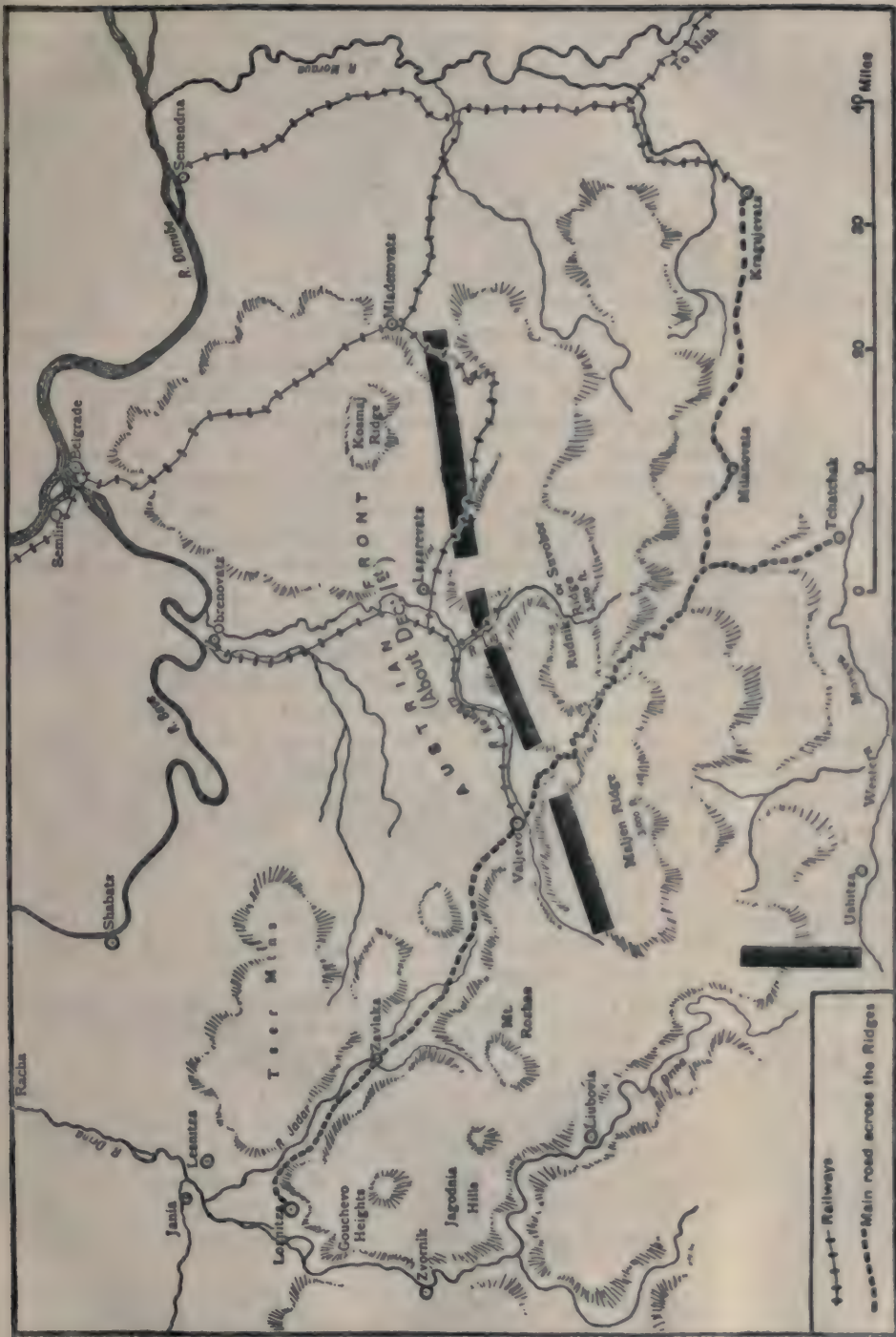
At this time, it will be remembered, the Russians were still in Western Galicia, and their line was threatening to complete the investment of Cracow. The moment was critical. The German counter-offensive against the Russian right centre had failed of its effect, and to relieve the pressure on the threshold of Silesia a flank attack along the northern foothills of the Carpathians was initiated. But to ensure success a further blow was necessary, and this was to be delivered farther east. Three army corps were hastily withdrawn from Servia and thrown, together with the other Austrian troops, through the Dukla Pass, through which the great road to Przemysl runs. It was this blow which saved Cracow for the time ; but it also lost Servia.

So far the Austrians had merely occupied the open country. There everything was in their favour. Victory in open country is to the well-armed. It is only under exceptional circumstances that the bayonet comes to its own. But, in order to reduce Servia, war had to be waged under conditions which offered tangible help to an active defending army. The irregular mountainous tract, which stretches across Servia from below the Save and Danube and west of the Drina, culminates in ridges, which run from the Upper Drina slightly north-east to a point on the Morava where the waters run through a gorge-like valley. The western part, the Maljen ridge, is, like the eastern, the Rudnik ridge, cut by passes at a slightly lower elevation. The average height of the ridges is about 3,200 feet, and that of the passes 1,000 feet less.

The Austrian campaign in Servia had as its objectives the clearing of the Upper Morava valley and the occupation of Nish, the old capital and present seat of Government. Against a direct advance up the Morava valley there was a great military obstacle. The hilly country on both sides of the river approaches the river bed at two points so closely as to form gorge-like gates, which could be held by a handful of men against hundreds ; and even were an advance up the valley itself easy the army would find its flanks and its communications exposed to perpetual attacks from the neighbouring hill country.

The Austrian plan boldly visualised the carrying of the Maljen ridge and Rudnik ridge, an advance on Tchatchak and Kragujevatz, and thence upon Nish. To carry these ridges a force was sent to clear the country south of the western spurs of the Maljen range. This force, advancing across the Upper Drina, bore down upon Ushitza, which is the terminus of the railway line running through the western valley watered by the Galitza Morava, at the head of which stands Tchatchak. Up this Galitza Morava valley the army, once the mountain ridge had been carried, meant to march upon Nish. It was hoped that the troops operating south of the Maljen ridge would clear the hills east to Ushitza, and so enable the force north of the mountains to issue from the first great pass. A further successful eastward advance and the second pass would be carried, and the Austrian columns would then make a massed advance upon Tchatchak and up the Galitza Morava valley. The plans were so far carried out that by the beginning of December the Austrians held Servia west of a line from Belgrade south to the mountain ridge, north of the ridge to the west, and west of a line from its westernmost spur to Ushitza. It





The Battle of the Servian Ridges.

will readily be seen how much slower the advance had been since the mountainous country had been entered. The ridge still stood as a rampart between the heroic Serbs and their powerful enemies, and the force at Ushitza was not so much a lever with which to force the barrier as a dangerously exposed flank.

It was at this point that a new weight was thrown into the scale. Negotiations had been taking place with a view to helping Servia. The Triple Entente had made overtures to Greece to go to the assistance of their former ally, and it is probable that these would have been successful but for the King of Greece, who had many reasons for being slow to abandon his neutrality. His wife, the sister of the German Emperor, was one. Another was his belief in the German military genius, which he had expressed, not too tactfully, some time before the war broke out. Greece, then, did not move; but munitions found their way into Servia at a critical moment and turned the scale. Austria was already beginning to suffer in the matter of her own supplies. In bitter winter weather she found herself compelled to fight in the midst of mountains, and to supply her lines by the poor and sparse roads. Now that the Serbs were able to fight on the offensive they lost no time in falling upon the enemy. These war-worn and weary veterans had resisted for nearly a month in the most hopeless conditions; now that conditions were a little nearer equality they felt as if the decision was already won. They began methodically in the east where the Austrians were entrenched on the Rudnik ridge. This district was speedily cleared, and the Serbs turned west and began to clear the Maljen mountains. They left Ushitza alone for the moment; but the Austrians saw, in time, the peril of their position, and when the Serbs had crossed the Maljen ridge, they abandoned it and fell back over the Drina.

The drive to the north and north-west still continued. A week after the Serbs had taken the counter-offensive, on 10th December, they were again in Valievo, which lies south of Shabatz at the foot of the hill country. By this time they had crossed the Drina towards the south and were marching upon Serajevo, the capital of Bosnia. The day after the re-occupation of Valievo the Servian force was within a day's march of the Bosnian capital; but they were fated not to take it. The Austrians could not afford to allow them to seize so important a town; and although the Austrians could not conquer the Serbs, they could at least defend chosen positions against them. Indeed, the Serbs were already experiencing this in the north-west of their own territory.

At the end of the second week in December the Servian troops made a triumphal entry into Belgrade amid scenes of wild enthusiasm. The capital had been abandoned without fighting; and on the 15th of December the whole of Servia was free of the enemy except at Shabatz on the Save, and Loznitza on the Drina. These two towns lying in open country, with a position well connected with Austrian bases and well covered from Austrian territory, were as difficult for the Serbs to retake as they had been difficult to hold. But although they still resisted the attempts of the Serbs at recapture, these were but small footholds to remain in the hands of what had been a large, well-equipped, and formidable army which had planned to overrun Servia.

The whole plan had miscarried. The Austrians might possibly have achieved their end if the whole of the original force had been left to cope with the situation; but this is not probable, since their advance had not been very speedy even when they had only to drive in front of them a small army who were almost out of ammuni-



tion. Once the Austrian invading force was halved to save Cracow their chances in Serbia became very much smaller, and when stores of ammunition found their way into the hands of their enemy they sank almost to the impossible.

Between the resumption of the offensive and their entry into Belgrade the Serbs took nearly 30,000 prisoners, nearly 50 machine guns, and 70 guns. These are large numbers. Indeed, not more than five times the number of prisoners could have been engaged at the end. But in hill fighting small bodies of men were daily cut off, or became isolated and surrendered. The Servian victory was complete, and its influence on the general situation must not be minimised. It was, of course, impossible that any decision between the Triple Entente and the Dual Alliance could be achieved in Serbia; but the completion of the original Austrian plan might have had very grave consequences for the Entente, and the Servian victory was a matter of rejoicing among the Entente Powers.

## VII. TURKEY WALKS THE PLANK.

"It is they, and not we, who have rung the death-knell of the Ottoman Empire, not only in Europe but in Asia. Nothing is further from our thoughts than to initiate or encourage a crusade against their creed. . . . The Turkish Empire has committed suicide, and dug with its own hands its grave."—[Mr. Asquith at the Guildhall.]

GERMANY's dream of world power had in it, like most dreams, a number of everyday possibilities, and it was some of these which forced Turkey into the war. Foiled of what she conceived as her legitimate desires in a number of directions, Germany turned her eyes to the Near East for a virtual if not an actual realisation of them. Staked-out claims met her in so many desirable quarters that she had to regard these as a more remote object than one which lay ready to her hand. The Triple Alliance if it could have been persuaded to remain triple, while docile to the militant mind of Prussia, gave her an unique strategic position in Europe. Even her Austro-Hungarian Alliance provided her with a strangely powerful strategic field, and, until the Balkan War readjusted frontiers so drastically, she could see a long and attractive vista stretching—a little mistily in the distance—to the Persian Gulf. Turkey, at that time, adjoined Austria-Hungary, and if Germany could cajole her into an alliance her way lay unimpeded across the territories of her allies to the headwaters of the Persian Gulf, to the door of Persia. Viewed with a little Teutonic imagination Persia was the ante-room to India.

The Treaty of Berlin ended an important chapter of the history of Turkey, sealing as it did the recognition of the rights of various former Turkish provinces for which Russia had fought long and valiantly, and against which, blinded by fear and suspicion of Russia, Great Britain had aided Turkey. The fear and suspicion did not pass; but the progress of liberal ideas in Great Britain and the growing recognition of Turkey's infamous rule weakened increasingly the desire of Britain to act as buttress to the Ottoman Empire, at least so far as Europe was concerned. In Asia, Great Britain still continued for some time to act as a sort of protector of Turkey.

A further change in the relations of Britain and Turkey was marked by the accession to power in 1908 of the Young Turks and the deposition of the Sultan. At

first feeling in Great Britain was all in favour of the Young Turks, who were thought to be inspired with liberal views ; but it speedily became apparent that the difference between the new and the old *régime* was the substitution of an active and efficient for a passive and decadent Turkish imperialism. Turkey had become inspired by German ideals. It would have been more than strange if she had not. She had been assiduously courted by Germany. Marshal von der Goltz had been entrusted with the reorganisation of the Turkish army in 1883. The Kaiser had visited Constantinople in 1889 and again in 1898. On the latter occasion he made a pilgrimage through Syria and the Holy Land, and in characteristic fashion proclaimed himself to be the protector of Islam.

The aim of Germany was to obtain an economic hold over Turkey. Before the first visit of the Kaiser the Deutsche Bank had secured control over the railways of European Turkey. This was a first step to the fertile lands of Mesopotamia, the probable cradle of the human race. The Deutsche Bank financiers then secured a concession for the construction of a railway through Asia Minor ; and after the Kaiser's second visit this was amplified and extended by a further concession to carry the railway to the Persian Gulf. Here was the Kaiser's golden bridge across Mesopotamia to India. Naturally British diplomacy did what it could to counteract or secure an offset to such an encroachment upon a sphere which indirectly, but nevertheless essentially, concerned her. But at the outbreak of the war Germany was still paramount in this design, as in the counsels of Turkey at home.

British feeling had, as we have seen, undoubtedly turned against Turkey, and in the failure to make feeling altogether agree with policy Britain took an undecided course at Constantinople. Once that began the result was certain. Gradually the influence of Britain waned and that of Germany grew. Economically and militarily organised by Berlin, was it not inevitable that Turkey should regard with favour the German political ideal ? Besides, the German was a much more congenial system than the British. Any real measure of self-government or political representation might have held together the Turkish Empire, but would undoubtedly have subordinated the Turk. The Young Turks desired this least of all. Theirs was a Turkish, not a democratic ideal, and the German system fitted such a scheme while the British did not.

Until the Young Turks came to power, however, Turkey had an established tradition of diplomacy which effectively preserved her domination. Ruling over alien and vigorous races like the Serbs and Bulgars of Macedonia, she could not have remained so long to imperil the peace of Europe if she had not thoroughly learned the game of playing off one great Power against another. With the accession to power of the Young Turks the German sun rose high in the heavens. The tragic history of the Balkan War did not cause more than a passing eclipse, since the Turks saw clearly enough that Britain could not sympathise with any policy which comprised the reconstruction of the state of affairs before the war, while such a reaction was to the direct interest of Germany. The Balkan War had built a strong wall between the Germanic Powers and Turkey, had, so to put it, placed sleepers across the line which ran in imagination, if in little more at the time, from Berlin to Bagdad. So the failure of Germany to ensure success to the Turkish arms did not ruin German prestige with Turkey, since with the Teutonic Powers lay her only hope of recovery.

So matters were disposed when the war broke out between the Teutonic Powers



and the Triple Entente. On 3rd August an incident occurred which had what might seem at first sight a disproportionate effect upon Turkey. Two Turkish battleships were building in England, and on that day Great Britain took them over. It was quite a natural thing to do. The Chilean monitors were acquired in the same way. But Turkey was considerably irritated at the action, though it can hardly be doubted that her later intervention in the war was more the cause than the effect of such irritation. Similarly the escape of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* into Turkish waters is more correctly to be conceived as the effect of a pro-intervention spirit than a cause of the war. On the part of Germany there can be little doubt that the act was deliberately conceived and carried out; and it is undoubtedly true that, if the Turks in power did not invite and encourage it, they most certainly welcomed it.

The *Goeben* and *Breslau* were German cruisers, manned by Germans. The *Goeben* was one of the most powerful vessels afloat when she steamed through the Dardanelles after bombarding the Algerian towns, Bona and Philippeville. The war had but just broken out. Turkey was technically a neutral, and the ships should have been dismantled according to the provisions of international law. On the British demand that these provisions should be complied with, Turkey replied that she had acquired the cruisers. This was illegal. But the German crews were never taken off the vessels, and they formed the nucleus of a German force which lay at the disposal of the war party; for the majority of the Turks did not wish for war, and least of all with Great Britain. German soldiers and officers began to arrive in Turkey. The Turks were on the move in Arabia as though towards Egypt. The Dardanelles was mined, and the whole situation became so threatening that Great Britain warned Turkey of the grave risk if such proceedings were not discontinued, while, on behalf of the Entente, she promised to guarantee the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire if Turkey remained neutral. The bid was not high enough. To the Teutonic Powers alone, where interest ran with inclination, she could look for the reinstatement of her rule over Macedonia.

On 29th October the *Goeben* and *Breslau* bombarded the Russian Black Sea ports, Odessa and Theodosia, and on the following day the British Ambassador in Constantinople, Sir Lucas Mallet, asked for his passports. There may have remained some doubt as to whether the *Goeben* and *Breslau* had acted on German initiative alone at the moment, and Great Britain waited a week to give the Turks time to reconsider. But they had apparently made up their minds, and on 5th November Great Britain declared war. On the following day France declared war, and on the 13th Turkey declared war on the Allies, the Khedive of Egypt being present in Constantinople at the time.

Turkey looked to regain the provinces she had lost in the Balkan War, though only to the sanguine minds of the Germans could such a position have appeared at all stable. Germany looked for more immediate and ambitious results for herself. By the end of October the first campaign in Poland had failed, and Germany was back again on her own frontiers with the Russians following up. A considerable part of Galicia was in Russian hands; and, while Germany did not feel much for Austria-Hungary, the fact showed that she had little to hope for from her ally. Russia had shown herself strangely formidable, in spite of her first disastrous campaign in East Prussia. In the West, although it was known that Great Britain was only beginning to assemble and organise her vast resources, the battle for the coast had gone de-

finitely against Germany, and she knew how fatal a long drawn out campaign must be with the British sea power intact and operative. Turkey was the one Power which provided a formidable diversion. Her entry into the war at once automatically effected a blockade of Russia, which nature and the Germans would make good elsewhere. When ice closed the northern Russian ports, only Siberia had a workable outlet, and this was too far off to be of much use. If Russia were shut in, where could she procure the equipment without which her numbers could not be drawn upon for effective participation in the war. Equipment could not reach her, and she could not make any use of her vast resources in wheat, which would have been of so much use to the Allies. This was the immediate effect of the closing of the Dardanelles.

In Europe, Turkey could not be of much assistance. The Russian Black Sea fleet put the *Goeben* temporarily out of action on 18th November, the *Breslau* saving herself by running away. Two Turkish transports were also sunk. But consider the position of Turkey in Asia. Her territories ran up to Egypt, to Russian Caucasia, to Persia, and to the headwaters of the Persian Gulf, which it had been the object of British diplomacy to keep in friendly hands. The threat of invasion of Russian Caucasia would detach certain Russian forces definitely from those available to act against Germany and Austria, since the Russian communications would not allow her to rush her units from the south to the west and north-west after the German plan. If Turkey attacked Persia she struck at both Russia and Britain, and the latter at a weak spot, for the Admiralty had but recently acquired a large interest in the Persian oil fields in the south. The threat to Egypt must detain there forces which would otherwise be available for the French theatre. If she could seize the Suez Canal she had at once cut British communications between the East and West ; and far beyond the immediate and material results of such an achievement would be the moral effect upon the Egyptian population and the peoples of India. Sedition had been persistently sown in Egypt, and the Khedive had openly espoused the Turkish cause.

A final trump card Turkey had up her sleeve. She hoped to detach Muhammadans from support of the British, and to incite them to hostility against Britain by the proclamation of a Holy War by the spiritual Muhammadan head, the Sultan. On 25th November a Holy War was actually proclaimed against the Entente Powers, but, oddly enough, it failed of its effect. Aga Khan, the spiritual head of the Muhammadans of India, was so openly loyal to the British Empire that he addressed a letter to his fellow-Muslims counteracting the Turkish proclamation. Germany had hoped great things from the proclamation of the Holy War, having a strange inability to grasp material psychology. But Turkey was to fail her ally more signally still.

The Turkish forces, which had spread terror in their advance on their first entry into Europe, had, during the last century, ceased to win even a moderate respect except for patient endurance and courage. But while such qualities are inherited by almost every race to some degree, the little excess which turns a well-fought battle into a victory instead of a merely honourable defeat, does not belong to the Turk. Well and boldly led on his first campaigns, he has ceased to find worthy leaders to-day. The old fatalistic fires still smoulder within him, but the external force requisite to fan them into flame has passed away. The army had been under the German *régime* before the Young Turks' revolution ; but the reorganisation had



not been completed before the Balkan War revealed once more the characteristic Turkish faults, slowness, bad leadership, lack of initiative, and disorganisation. After the war General Liman von Sanders, who replaced Marshal von der Goltz as head of the German military mission, with a Staff which increased like a mustard tree, gained ever-increasing power over the army. But the Turkish mobilisation, which began at the outbreak of the war, was not completed for nearly two months, when there were about three-quarters of a million men under arms, three times the number of the peace establishment.

The disposition of the Turkish troops when Turkey entered the war requires little comment. Some 200,000 lay in European Turkey for the defence of the capital and for any chance which might occur of regaining her former territory. Another of the main centres of concentration was in Syria, for the descent upon Egypt. The third lay where Turkey stood *vis-à-vis* with her old enemy Russia, on



Peace Distribution of Turkish Army Corps. The 14th Corps has no Territorial Base.

the Caucasian frontier. One army corps was stationed at Bagdad, but one of its divisions was drawn upon for the action on the Caucasian frontier. In the disposition of the troops there is evidence of a projected offensive on two frontiers, the Caucasian and Egyptian, and there were incidents which tended to indicate an advance against Persia. But the most unexpected campaign into which Turkey was forced to enter was that initiated by the British at the head of the Persian Gulf.

There is no need here to detail the long, persistent, and intricate course of German intrigue, which for almost a generation had aimed at unsettling the British domination of the waters of the Persian Gulf. Owing to the vigilance of resident officials they had achieved very little when the war broke out, and, oddly enough to the student of British history, far-seeing and vigorous action took place very early in the war. Even before the war a strong British force had been accumulated at the island Bahrein, a British possession in the Persian Gulf. The Government of India

had sent there the Poona Brigade, including the 2nd Dorsets, native troops, and two mountain batteries, under Brigadier-General Delamain. On 7th November the Brigade had left Bahrein and reached the mouth of the Shat-el-Arab, the river which receives the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates. Some three miles from the mouth lies the Turkish round fort and cable station of the Indo-European Cable Company, and the village of Fao. H.M.S. *Odin*, a small gunboat, under Commander Cathcart Wason, reduced the fort in less than an hour, and the village was occupied by marines from the battleship *Ocean* and a small force of native infantry.

The remainder of the force then proceeded up the river between the high mud banks which bound Persia on the right and Arabia on the west. The object of the expedition was to protect the property of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The refinery and works had been under the protection of the gunboat *Espiègle*. The headquarters of the company are at Mohammerah; but the works are on the island of Abadan. Only the night before the expedition arrived the *Espiègle* had put to flight two Turkish rover gunboats, which could hardly have resisted so tempting a bait as the huge oil refinery. General Delamain disembarked and entrenched at Saniyeh, to the north of Abadan. Here he was attacked in the early morning of 11th November, and after a spirited little action the Turks were compelled to withdraw with heavy loss.

Two days later Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Barrett arrived off the Shat-el-Arab to take command of the operations with two additional brigades, some artillery and cavalry. On the 15th the reinforcements disembarked at Saniyeh. While this operation was proceeding General Delamain was attacking Sahain, a village to the north, which was held by some 1,500 Turks with about 500 Arab troops. The attack was supported by the two gunboats, and the village was set on fire. In the fighting the Dorsets had to move across an open plain, and only the poor firing of the enemy saved them from serious loss. As it was, they lost five killed and thirty-five wounded.

On 17th November the British force was on the march in the early dawn. The action two days before had not cleared Sahain, but on reaching the village it was found to be abandoned, and contact with the enemy was not established until the troops had approached Sahil, some ten miles farther north. The enemy was found to be strongly entrenched and supported by a number of guns. Some of these were well hidden, but one or two were near the trenches. Again, as at Sahain, the advance had to be made across open ground with no cover; and only the finest troops could have made headway against the heavy fire. The two gunboats again co-operated, throwing a persistent fire on the Turkish left. The troops maintained their advance. The trenches were being heavily shelled, and the British with fixed bayonets were prepared for the final rush when the Turks broke and fled.

The ground was too heavy for a very energetic pursuit. A storm during the engagement had made it impossible to use the cavalry, and it is stated that the British guns ceased fire owing to the appearance of a mirage which completely obscured their view. The casualties on the British side amounted to 38 killed and about 320 wounded. The Dorsets, as at Sahain, suffered most heavily. On the Turkish side the losses were much heavier. They left hundreds of dead on the field, and their wounded were computed at 2,000. Between 150 and 200 prisoners were taken, with camels, mules, guns, and stores.

Four days later news was received at Saniyeh, on which General Barrett had retired with the bulk of his force, that the Turks had left the important town of



Basra, and that Arabs were looting the place. It had been expected that a place of such importance, with an export trade of some £3,000,000, would have been taken only after a considerable action. General Barrett determined to go to Basra at once. He left with part of his force on two steamers, ordering the bulk of his force to march across the desert. The river expedition comprised also the gunboats *Odin* and *Espiègle*. The Turks had attempted to block the river some miles above Sahil by sinking three vessels, but the gunboats got past without trouble, and the transports steamed forward on the next morning. The gunboats had gone ahead, and the



The Conquest of the Delta.

Arab reign of terror was effectually stopped. Early on the morning of 22nd November the British flag floated over Basra, which has enjoyed a chequered but distinguished history since its foundation in the seventh century. Basra was the port for which the historical Sinbad the Sailor set out on his journeys. The city was formally entered and taken over on 23rd November.

Fifty miles above Basra lies Kurna, at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates. It is supposed by the Arabs to be the site of the Garden of Eden. Here the Turks, after evacuating Basra, had re-formed and entrenched; and at the beginning of December it was decided to attack the position. On 4th December the expedition under Lieutenant-Colonel Frazer arrived, with Indian troops and some companies

of the Norfolks, a few miles from Kurna, and the gunboats and armed launches shelled the place. On the left bank of the Tigris over against Kurna lies the village Mezera, which was held by the Turks. The houses were loopholed, and entrenchments had been thrown up. After a preparatory shelling the British force cleared the village, the Turks crossing to Kurna in boats. When this had been achieved it was discovered that Kurna was too strongly held for an attack by the small British force to be successful. Colonel Frazer accordingly retired on his landing-place, entrenched, and sent an appeal to Basra for reinforcements. Kurna, it was found, was being strengthened, and Colonel Frazer's force had to lie entrenched and on the watch until Brigadier-General Fry arrived on 6th December with some Rajput troops and the remainder of the Norfolks' battalion.

On the next morning the village of Mezera, which the Turks had reoccupied, was taken once more, and with it over a hundred prisoners and several guns. On this occasion the troops held the village; and on the following morning part of the force marched higher up the Tigris, crossed, and marching down upon Kurna, seized the country round the town. They entrenched in the groves on the outskirts. Late that night a deputation from the military commander steamed down the river and arranged the details of surrender. General Fry insisted that it must be unconditional, and on the next day, 9th December, the surrender took place. The prisoners amounted to 42 officers and 1,021 men, and the casualties were estimated at about the same number. The British casualties numbered about 188. Strong forces were left at Kurna and Mezera, the occupation of which gave the British complete control of the Delta. The Persian oil fields were thus protected; a diversion was created from the attack on Egypt; and, perhaps the chief aim of the expedition, a claim was staked out in the ancient lands of Mesopotamia.

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More important was the campaign in the Caucasus, the opening moves of which were initiated at the very beginning of the war. One of the objects of the forcing of Turkey into the war was, as we have seen, the attraction of certain Russian units from the Galician and Polish theatre of the war; and to achieve this the Turks were asked to initiate some movement against that region, and the army of the Caucasus was concentrated under Izzet Pasha, with Enver Bey, Turkey's evil genius and commander-in-chief, in supreme command. The Russians were, not unnaturally, sufficiently forewarned of Turkey's intentions, and the outbreak of war found her dispositions complete not for defensive action only, though that in the main must have been her most prudent strategy, but for a rapid offensive. The frontier country is a bitter field for a winter campaign. The Russo-Turkish frontier is a mountain wall from the Black Sea to Mount Ararat, where the Persian frontier begins. North and south of the Russo-Turkish frontier, too, is a crumpled, puckered mass of mountain country. North and south of and about equidistant from the frontier respectively, on two heights, stand Kars and Erzerum, which were the centres of concentration. From the fortress of Kars runs a railway across the mountains to Sarikamish, a town just on the Russian side of the frontier. A bitter wind-swept, snow-clad country in winter, its roads all lie on elevations which at the time of the year when the campaign opened lay under snow.

The first movements in this region were a demonstration by Russia towards Erzerum. At the opening of November the Caucasian troops, under Vorontzov, were deployed over the whole length of the frontier, and penetrated some eighteen





The Frontiers of Turkey, Persia, and Russia.

miles into Turkish territory. On 3rd November they had taken the important town of Bayazid, near the southern slopes of Mount Ararat ; and along the frontier as far as Ardost the Turkish frontier towns had fallen into Russian hands. A counter-offensive urged by Kurdish regiments towards Kara Kilissa and Alaschgerd was thrown back with loss ; and after a severe fight the fortified Turkish town of Koprukeui was taken on 6th November. Koprukeui lies only thirty-three miles east of Erzerum, and its capture raised the highest hopes of the impending siege and capture of that fortress. The importance of the position seized by the Russians was such that the Turks brought up a large force from Erzerum and attempted not only to recover the town, but also to envelop the Russians. The engagement opened at dawn on 8th November, and grew in intensity towards the afternoon, when the enemy threw in his reserves. But the Russians, fighting with great bravery, were not to be dispossessed of their capture, and by the evening they were left in possession, the two Turkish divisions employed against them being badly mauled.

A few days later the Turks, heavily reinforced, once more threw themselves against Koprukeui, and the Russians were compelled to fall back. But Russian reinforcements were hurried forward and the advance was resumed, and after three days of fierce fighting the Russians had control once again of the disputed point of vantage. The advance towards Erzerum was pressed forward towards Hassan Kala, nearly ten miles from Koprukeui. Towards the east the Russians met with more resistance, and the advance south of Kara Kilissa and Alaschgerd was very slow. Towards the end of the month the Russian offensive, gathering strength, inflicted a heavy defeat on the Turkish forces defending Erzerum and threw them back on the fortress. Their losses were very considerable, two divisions alone losing nearly half their number. The force moving southwards from Kara Kilissa and Bayazid defeated the 34th Division near Melasgerd with heavy loss, the casualties including the commander of the division.

The Turks who took part in these main engagements appeared to be well trained and disciplined, and they fought with great valour ; but at the end of the month, although Erzerum had not been taken, the Russians were well established over the frontier, they had captured numerous prisoners, ammunition wagons, and much ammunition, and the situation called for resolute action if the Turks were to prevent Armenia being completely overrun. That the Turks were not incapable of such a movement the sequel was to show.

## VIII. THE BATTLE ABOUT LODZ.

THE Austro-German armies, foiled in their first attempt to force the Vistula and San and take Warsaw, fell back in good order—so far as the Germans are concerned—to the Russo-German frontier and towards Cracow. It is truer perhaps to say they fell back to the Russo-German frontier and were pressed back towards Cracow. The German army on the left wing of the Allied front fell back farthest, most rapidly, and in best order. To say so much is no small praise ; but the achievement is slightly less than it looks in view of the small pressure brought to bear upon the retreating line. Indeed, as we have seen, the Russians did not even always preserve contact with the enemy, whose retreat it was their business to harry.

In the light of the German recovery and renewed offensive between the Vistula



and Warta, some critics have seen an element of the superb in the strategic retreat of the Germans before Warsaw. They are held to have retreated to the south-west instead of due west, to draw the Russians after them, and so prepare the ground for a successful attack upon the weakened Russian right from the north. But that this was not so much strategy as necessity is seen when one visualises the Russian stroke which compelled the retreat in the first instance. It was of the nature of a smashing blow from Novo Georgievsk, and the northern extremity of the German line first swayed, became bent, and then, the critical point reached, fell back to save itself from being outflanked; and it fell back in the only direction a line so menaced could safely fall back—towards the south-west.

It is necessary to view the position in the light of events already dealt with. Sandomir fell into Russian hands on 3rd November. This town lies on the Vistula just above its junction with the San, and it is about 120 miles from the Russo-German frontier on the Russo-Galician frontier. On the same day Kielce was occupied; the Germans had passed Przedborz, on the Upper Pilitz; they had been pushed out of Wola, not twenty miles from Thorn; and the Russians were in Bakarzewo, east of Suwalki, just on the Russian side of the East Prussian frontier. These points trace out a line running north-west from Sandomir and nearing the German frontiers as they go. They indicate a Russian offensive against East Prussia as well as against German Poland. The advance was continued, but at the same relative rates. In a few days the Russians were in East Prussia and over the frontier of German Poland; but it was not until the end of the month they were able to take Wieliczka, on the outskirts of Cracow.

Taking the operations as a whole, certain observations can be made. The Russian object was to inflict such a blow on Germany that the Germans would be compelled to bring over from the West further reinforcements, which would enable the Allies to advance, and they could do so *via* Galicia or by marching through Poland, or from the Niemen. But the advance through Galicia was aimed at Silesia, and to the attack on this territory that on East Prussia was subsidiary. Russia, geographically, was handicapped in a struggle with Germany and Austria, since Poland makes a salient into Germany, having East Prussia on its northern and Galicia on its southern flank. Consequently East Prussia and Galicia had both to be held and engaged before an advance could safely be made through Poland. It was for this reason that, as the Russian main line swept on towards Posen, the flanks also pressed forward, the southern seeking to take or mask Cracow, and the northern to overrun East Prussia. Germany's first object was negative, to keep the Russians at whatever cost off German soil. The advantage of capturing Warsaw in this plan was that, such a centre taken, the Russian offensive would be crippled for a considerable time.

It will have been observed that the manœuvring of the generals of all the armies aimed, not at countering the offensive of the enemy directly, but at compassing this by threatening another part of his line either with outflanking and subsequent envelopment, or with fracture and local envelopment of the parts. The Allies in the West, threatened with the breaking of their line near Vitry and Fère, threw their full force against the right wing of the enemy and so relieved the pressure, throwing him back upon the Aisne. The Russians, threatened at Warsaw and below, hurled a large force against the German left flank and compelled the enemy to fall back to avoid envelopment. Cracow was the immediate point of danger for the Austro-German

Allies, and to relieve that fortress, the loss of which would have been almost as disastrous to the Germans as the piercing of their territory in Poland, Hindenburg very shrewdly determined to hold the Cracow wing as best he might, hold lightly the Polish centre, and strike at the Russian front between the Vistula and the Warta with his full force. The force he allocated to this movement must have aggregated about half a million, and to put them in the desired position he had to draw his troops back within the German frontier and then redistribute them with the utmost speed by means of the German frontier network of railways. Whatever success he might achieve was of little worth unless he could relieve the threat to Cracow, but he stood to do much more than this.

On their retreat before the Russians the Germans had carefully done their best to wreck completely the already poor railway system. Now an army's communications are an element of the army's strength and efficiency. It is misleading to consider them as external to the army. They are part of its life—its arteries and veins. Along them pass from the heart—its bases of concentration and depots—ammunition, food, and reinforcements, the materials which preserve and augment its life; along them, too, pass from its extremities all the waste and hampering excretions of life. Hindenburg in destroying the railway system was severing the Russian main arteries, checking the life-giving and life-building flow to the armies. His plan was to hurl a huge army against the weakest spot in the Russian line. He knew that the main Russian force pressed on towards Cracow and the Silesian frontier. He knew that even under normal conditions it would be difficult to draw off forces from the centre and south of the Russian line to help the threatened north, because of the weak railway system. His destruction of the railways meant that the operation was practically impossible, and that if his blow were delivered with sufficient force and pressed home he might be able to throw back the right flank of the Russian army so far that he could automatically outflank the central section of the line and, as a consequence of this, also the southern. His strategy, then, aimed at not only forcing his enemy to retreat and fall back from Silesia, but at so thoroughly beating him that, for a time at any rate, the Germans might count themselves free from anxiety in the East, and they could then turn their attention once more to the West.

Time meant everything to Hindenburg, it must be remembered. If the Russians in the north, although confronted by superior forces, could hold out long enough, their reinforcements would arrive and the Germans might not only fail to relieve the south, but might even be thrown back across their frontier. That was a risk Hindenburg ran. There was another. The Russian Staff never contemplated drawing forces from the Cracow-Silesian front with any speed. They knew that their communications would not permit such an operation, and that everything depended on using the sparse railways for the sections immediately in front and about them. This being so, some system had to be devised to reinforce any section which might be suddenly threatened. The Russian plan was to accumulate, not far in the rear of the fighting front, sufficient forces for any operation which might reasonably be called for. The Russian soldier has an extraordinary power of resistance, of holding out under tremendous punishment; and the Staff felt that if put to it they could hold to any position which was essential sufficiently long to enable the reinforcements to come up.

There was an element in the situation which Hindenburg's strategy had to take into account. Obstacles are the first charge upon the rate of advance of an army.



The Germans, choosing to strike from Thorn, had to make sure that such obstacles as might stem the tide of their advance were not sufficient to rob them of the advantage given by their railways and the consequent element of surprise. Now the angle which the Vistula makes with the German boundary is fairly clear of obstacles for some sixty miles—that is, up to the banks of the Bzura, which throws its winding line and marshy borders across to the Warta. As an offset to this there is the railway which supplies Lowicz and the road which follows it, and the road from Posen. But neither of these advantages can rob the Bzura of its objectionableness to an army wishing to reach Warsaw with the greatest rapidity. The marshy land in the neighbourhood of its banks has indeed but two really good crossings, one towards Piontek and the other towards Leczyca. It was in this neighbourhood that the Germans had chosen to shoot their bolt.

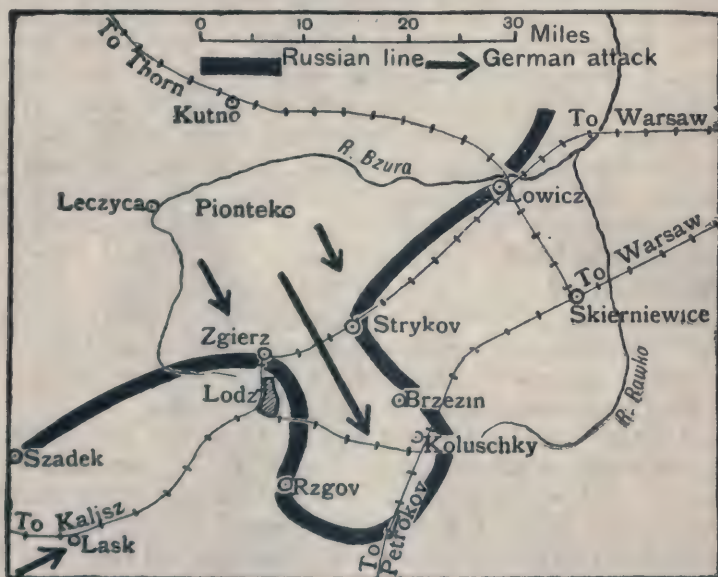
On 8th November the Russians had thrown the Germans out of Wloclawek to Nieszdwa, a few miles from Thorn, and pushed back the Germans also to Slupca, on the German frontier, forty miles east of Posen. A day or two later they were engaging the Germans at Goldap and Soldau, over the East Prussian frontier. There was a certain ebb and flow in the battles in this section of the field. It was vital to neither side. Both Germans and Russians wished merely to hold that quarter—the Germans so that they might strike from Thorn, the Russians to invest Cracow and cross into Silesia. But behind the retreating German lines a great force was gathering, and the first impetus of the new movement on the 15th forced back the Russians from Soldau and Wloclawek. The Russians, at this moment were pressing the Austrians in Galicia and initiating a movement into Hungary. They were compelled to fall back from Wloclawek, and the Germans followed up the retreating force and delivered a heavy blow at it near Kutno. This so-called victory of Kutno, for which Hindenburg received his marshal's baton, cost the Russians something no doubt. They were outnumbered by nearly three to one.

But that it was no victory in the true sense of the word, is shown by the fact that the Russians were able to put the marshy barrier of the Bzura between them and the Germans, and to hold the crossings for some time against the enemy. By the 20th the 9th German Army, now under Mackensen, keeping an opportunist eye for any chance that offered, had crossed the Bzura and had caught up the bulk of their number for a smashing blow at the Russian centre near Lodz. It was a bold stroke, and the worst that can be said of it is that it succeeded, for the success proved the most perilous thing which could have happened for the Germans. Here, according to all the principles of strategy, the Russians should have been defeated. Their line was broken, and the 25th Reserve Corps (von Schäffer-Bonadel), 3rd Guard Division (Litzmann), and von Richthofen's Cavalry Corps poured through.

The actual state of the case was far otherwise. It came very near real disaster for the Germans. Every day brought up fresh numbers to the Russians. The Russian Staff had by this time a fairly clear notion of what they had to face. There was little chance of summoning reinforcements from the southern part of their line, which was now fighting about Czenstochowa. But reinforcements were sent from Warsaw, only fifty-five miles or so distant. Hence, it happened that the Russian line made to sag, yield, and break, was almost at once closed up, and a German division was cut off and surrendered. They had forced the Russian line to Tuszyn and Rzgow. The Russians still held Lodz and were west of Lowicz. The line there made a rough sort of V, one of its arms passing through Zgierz and round

Lodz, the other having its outer extremity at Lowicz and the angular point being near Tuszyn.

When the Russians, re-forming their line, had taken the German division, they at once strove to drive in both sides of the V and envelop the two corps which had pushed forward through the breach in the line. Three days tremendous fighting now took place. The German effort was directed to holding open the closing jaws of the Russian trap, and their immediate action was to throw heavier forces into the trap and to deliver heavy blows near the points where the Russians were attempting to press in. These points were Zgierz and Strykov, and the Germans fighting heroically within the angle were, by the help of those two counter-strokes, enabled to escape the closing jaws of the trap, though at a heavy cost. If Rennenkampf had sent reinforcements in reasonable time—and there is no explanation so far of his failure—the Germans would have been annihilated. Rennenkampf was superseded



The "Pocket" in the Russian Line.

and the Germans escaped. They fell back towards Brezeziny and Strykov, and Hindenburg was able to announce on 28th November that the "Russian offensive" was brought to a standstill.

This extraordinary announcement means that the German position was again straightforward. The terrible speed with which Ruzsky closed the gap in his line, capturing a division at once, and then prepared to annihilate the rest of the Germans who had pressed forward into the trap, is one of the best examples of this general's resolution and energy. Few scenes in a war which has been fruitful in scenes of horror can equal that of the Germans struggling wildly against the steel wall which encased them on three sides and threatened to close in on the fourth. The Russians, through Rennenkampf's default, lacked the numbers to close the jaws of the trap; the Germans were resolved not to surrender, and though the supplies of food and ammunition were failing they hurled themselves with desperate energy at the wall



of bayonets. From the shape of the angle the greatest danger was apprehended on the eastern side from Lowicz; and hence at Strykov, where the Russian advance was most deadly, the Germans fought like maddened beasts. But, however hard they were driven, they contrived to leave obstacles in the way of the Cossacks.

On 1st December the Germans issued an official *communiqué* announcing that their strategy had aimed at encircling the Russian right and turning it back upon the centre. Hence the driving in of the line about Lodz was, as we have seen, a purely incidental development, one of the first fruits of Hindenburg's regrouping of his forces. The "German losses naturally were not small," the *communiqué* adds. Two days before this the Germans were holding the fortified line Zdunszawa-Szadek-Zgierz-Strykov, and the fighting was still remarkably stubborn on the section Zgierz-Strykov, where the German line was assimilating under a never relaxed pressure and bombardment, the mangled units which had escaped from the Russian trap. The line traced on the map between these points shows that Lodz was even now forming a salient, and although it was much straighter and easier to hold than when the Germans had been struggling in the V-like depression south and south-east of Lodz, the town formed a danger to the Russians unless they could drive back the whole German line a considerable distance. The Germans, however, were entrenched, and hence, with the numbers at the disposal of the Russians, could not be driven back. On the other hand, if the Germans chose to attack at this point, the Russian line would be endangered by being compelled to fall back past a huge manufacturing city with its widely spreading suburbs.

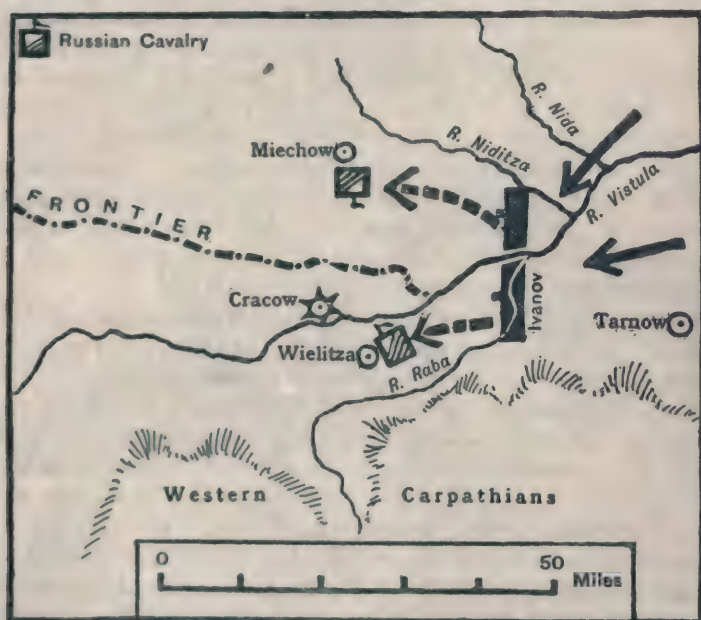
Accordingly, at midnight on 5th December, the Russians evacuated the city, and Ruszky re-formed his line to the east in the rear of the city. The capture of Lodz was announced in Berlin as a brilliant German victory, and an official *communiqué* announced that the Russians retreated with enormous loss. Berlin was gay with flags. The fact is that the Russians evacuated the town so skilfully that for fifteen hours the Germans remained inactive in front of the empty trenches. The inhabitants of Berlin were allowed to celebrate the victory with flags and rejoicing, and it was not until the 12th, just a week later, that the German *communiqué* announced the true condition of the capture of Lodz. Even on this occasion, however, the German Staff attempted to save its face by speaking of the enormous Russian losses of the three days preceding the evacuation. But even this is a misrepresentation. If the German army had inflicted such losses on the Russians, it is inconceivable they should have allowed them to slip away without notice. This was not the case when the Russians were actually inflicting heavy losses on the Germans in the pocket between Zgierz and Strykov. Contact was preserved all the time, and the Germans, as was admitted by them officially, only escaped by heavy losses.

In this almost unique episode in the history of warfare, the breaking of the line by so large a force, its healing with the inevitable cutting off of the advanced portion of the enemy, and the struggle against envelopment by the supporting sections, almost the most extraordinary point is this amazing avidity for victories which persuaded the Germans to publish as a victory what was nothing of the sort, and the sequel, an admission, couched almost in the very terms of the Russian official *communiqué*, that the evacuation of Lodz was secret and compelled by no immediate pressure.

But the real significance of these operations is to be found in the fortunes of the Russian army threatening Cracow and Silesia. It was to save this danger

centre that Hindenburg, with masterly strategy, aimed at the Russian right centre. The means which made such a stroke possible were the purely mechanical ones of the German frontier railway system. If he could have achieved his end of throwing back the Russian right centre upon the centre he would have cut the communications of that section of the line, and the progressive movement would have threatened even the communications which supplied the Czenstochowa-Cracow section. The Russian Staff persisted, even under the strong menace to their right centre, in maintaining the offensive against Cracow.

The Russians under Ivanoff had penetrated to Czenstochowa at the end of the first week in November. A fortnight later they still remained there, but their hold had grown firmer, and they were dealing with the situation in Galicia in a thoroughly competent way. Przemyśl invested once more, troops were thrown forward to



The Russian Position near Cracow at the beginning of December.

Sanok and Lisko towards the Carpathians; they held the Dukla Pass and threatened the Hungarian plain from thence; they advanced to Novo Sandec; and, the flank and rear thus protected from any force which might issue through the Carpathians, Dimitrieff's army pressed on towards Cracow. In bitterly cold weather and in a terribly exposed region they succeeded in maintaining a consistent advance. Frequent battles took place in snowstorms. Entrenchments were even dug in the snow, and the inevitable consequence was that the advancing armies often marched over frozen corpses.

On the first day of December, when the thermometer registered nearly 20 degrees of frost, the Russian cavalry of Ivanoff's army had seized Wieliczka, which lies not four miles from Cracow. From this point of vantage the Russians seemed as if they would be able to bring an overwhelming pressure to bear upon the ancient town; but by this time the Austro-German allies had become fully alive to the seriousness



of the situation, and reinforcements in constantly increasing numbers were thrown forward to this section of the Polish and Galician front. The fine railway system behind the Silesian frontier enabled them to be collected in force and thrown into the line from Czenstochowa to Cracow.

The two lines faced one another obstinately for days. The Russians had not the numbers to force a decision. German reinforcements were being thrown into the scale from the Polish centre and from the Western front. In accordance with the familiar German strategy, which was far more hackneyed on the whole than the Russian, a vigorous attempt was made to take the Russian army in flank. Along the low foothills of the Carpathians a strong force was thrown. Coming from behind and south of Cracow this force threatened the whole Russian position. If it could force back the southern extremity of the line then the Russian army would be obliged to fall back. This was achieved by the Battle of Limanova.

Several factors contributed to this resolution of the situation. The stability of the Russian position in front of Cracow depended upon the security of their position throughout Galicia. If any part of that position were threatened the Russian army in front of Cracow would have to be weakened to protect the main communications. But to secure the communications in Galicia, a line of over one hundred miles had to be held. It was from a vital part of this line at the crucial moment that the threat came. A strong Austrian force regained possession of the Dukla Pass, through which the railway from Przemyśl ran.

There is another element in the situation which had vital consequences. It was more difficult to hold a position at the foot of the Carpathians than to force it. The Russian line could not, with the numbers at its disposal, do more than hold the northern foothills of the Carpathians. It was comparatively an easy feat for an enemy, whose army lay on both sides of the mountains, to force back the extremity of the line which hung, so to say, in the air. Weakened in the rear, faced by a powerful force in front, the Russian line gave way in the south. In mid-December Novo Sandec was once more in Austrian hands, and the Russian line in front of Cracow had to fall back. Such a result was not achieved without severe fighting and a wavering of the lines backward and forward for several days. The situation in Galicia had been relieved, though not by Hindenburg's blow at the northern flank. The Russians had to fall back from before Cracow owing to an operation shrewdly conceived and vigorously delivered in that quarter; and the southern section of the line did not fall back as a whole for another week.

In the last week of December Hindenburg was able to say, truly for the first time in these operations, which had lasted nearly two months, that for the time he had averted the threatened blow. The Allies had been manœuvring an army not far short of 2,000,000 men; but at the crucial moment they had to depend for the diversion in Eastern Galicia upon troops drawn from the Servian theatre. The Germans had already celebrated a victory at Kutno, which had proved but a prelude to the reverse south of Lodz. Hindenburg had been made a Field-Marshal for that achievement. No one could tell that it would lead to his men walking into a trap and paying for it. The Russian army had to fall back for a time. Their strategy was extremely simple. If reinforcements could not come to them, they would go to the reinforcements. It was not defeat. There was nothing final about it. They fell back in an orderly manner, and before long were developing an offensive in a new direction.

## IX. WARSAW BY CHRISTMAS.

THERE was one unique feature in the war. A battle in former wars meant the engagement of opposing troops until one or other army lost either coherence or such numbers that its efficiency as a fighting force was considerably diminished, and it was therefore compelled to break off the struggle. Such engagements were of so decisive a nature that they were succeeded by a lull, and after a number of these partial decisions a nation was willing to come to terms. A distinguished writer held that decisive actions were no longer possible. The end of this war, he held, would be the exhaustion of all parties, and peace would mean the cessation by consent, when such exhaustion was reached. He took no cognisance of degrees of exhaustion, and the greater readiness of one party to make peace owing to its greater exhaustion and the obvious approach of a decision.

But there is this that can be said for the view that four years of the war provided no actions which had the relative decisiveness of many in the Franco-Prussian War and some in the Russo-Japanese War. Some engagements, or group of engagements, tended to take a decisive nature. Such were the battles of Tannenberg, the Marne, and Lemberg; but even these were less battles of the old sort than culminations of intensity in a struggle that was almost continuous over hundreds of miles between millions of men. The battles of the Marne merged into the struggle on the Aisne; after Tannenberg came the engagements at Lyck and on the Niemen; and the Battle of Lemberg only derives a natural terminus from the cession of that important city: the struggle continued without any cessation towards Grudek and across Galicia.

It is necessary to insist on this point in order to make it clear that, though the battle about Lodz, the sagging, fracture, and healing of the Russian line, have a certain unity of extraordinary quality which rounds off a complete story, there was no pause in the struggle in this quarter of the Russo-German battle front. Hindenburg's strategy consisted in no subtler plan than to strike with tremendous violence at points in the Russian line as far apart as possible. While there was little subtlety in such strategy, there was much sense in it. He knew his enemy's weakness, an immobility which would have been fatal if it had not had the quality of its defect, the ability to bear up against these tremendous odds. Hindenburg had no sooner re-formed the shattered remnants of the force thrown against the Russian front north of Lodz, than he had planned with reinforcements to hurl another heavy blow at another part of the Russian line. The action near Lodz, costly as it had been for the Germans, and fatal, as it would have been, but for the strange incapacity of Rennenkampf to assist at a critical moment, a failure which earned his supersession, had this effect which, under the circumstances, was of considerable value to the enemy; it had drawn about this quarter Ruszky's main force from Central Poland, the army of Warsaw, and the force which Rennenkampf had commanded.

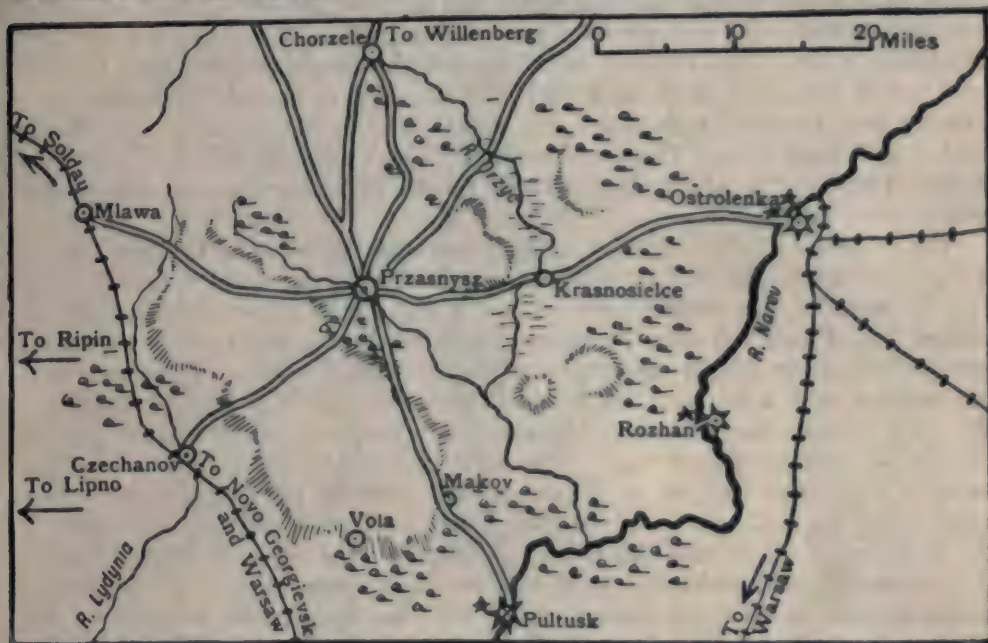
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Hindenburg concentrated a new force under Zastrow, and threw it against the Narev. It was not a very large force, but Hindenburg knew that relatively it was a strong army as compared with the only troops it would be called upon to meet. Concentrating in East Prussia, the new German army moved to Mława and marched rapidly south-east towards the line Przasnysz-Czechanov. The latter town stands on the railway between Mława and Warsaw, about midway between



Mława and the great Russian fortress Novo Georgievsk. The plan was to make a rapid advance against the line of the Narev, one of the series of rivers which guard Warsaw from the north. The line was to be carried, and the German force would then be in a position to strike down behind Warsaw. The stroke was skilfully conceived. Complete success meant the isolation and subsequent capture of Warsaw; even partial success might eventually have the same result. For if the German force could press forward even to the line of the Narev the Russians would be compelled to weaken their lines south of the Vistula, and Hindenburg's constant attacks on that front would stand a vastly improved chance of success.

In this direction heavy fighting was continuous for about a week, by the end of which Przasnysz was in German hands. But the capture had not been announced in Berlin before the Russian counter-attack had recovered it. The German wireless



The First Advance towards the Narev.

news on 13th December was expatiating on the significance of the success when the town had already fallen once more into Russian hands. The tide in this quarter had definitely turned, and the Russians began to push the Germans back across the frontier. They pressed their advance in this quarter with such energy that by the end of the third week in December they were established in a strategically strong position north of the Vistula towards Rypin and Lipno.

Meanwhile Hindenburg, spurred on by the determination to take Warsaw by Christmas, was making renewed efforts in Poland. Ivanoff lay before Cracow. It was to save Cracow and its hinterland, industrial Silesia, that Hindenburg desired to capture Warsaw. Mackensen, who had rescued the bulk of the troops from the pocket near Lodz, was quietly reinforced, and stood on the line Lowicz-Lodz with a strong army. Ruzsky, now in failing health, but still the keenest brain in the

Russian army, had evacuated Lodz to strengthen his line which linked to the south with Ivanoff's army. During the second week in December violent attacks by German columns were being hurled against Lowicz and the Bzura line. They made little impression upon the Russians, who stolidly stuck to their positions and hurled a murderous fire into the columns advancing ever in close formation. The German losses were heavy, but the order was still onward; and at length they seemed to make the Russian position untenable. The true statement of the case is that the Galician armies were being menaced, and if they fell back Ivanoff, in Southern Poland, must fall back too. It was decided to take up a stronger line between the Vistula and the Galician frontier. The Russian army before Warsaw fell back to the Rawka line. From the Vistula the new line ran along the Bzura to its junction with the Rawka, thence it ran to the Pilitza, across to the Nida and the Dunajec. Strong entrenchments had been dug along this line, and the falling back, of course, achieved Hindenburg's end for the time. The reconstruction of the Russian lines was hailed in Berlin as a victory; but it needs little thought to make clear that the very retreat imposed a handicap upon the Germans, even though it admitted their security from immediate invasion. To attack the line the Germans were drawn farther from their base. Their communications had to be extended. Supplies of all sorts were a continual charge upon them, and the lines, waver as they might, were safe for the winter.

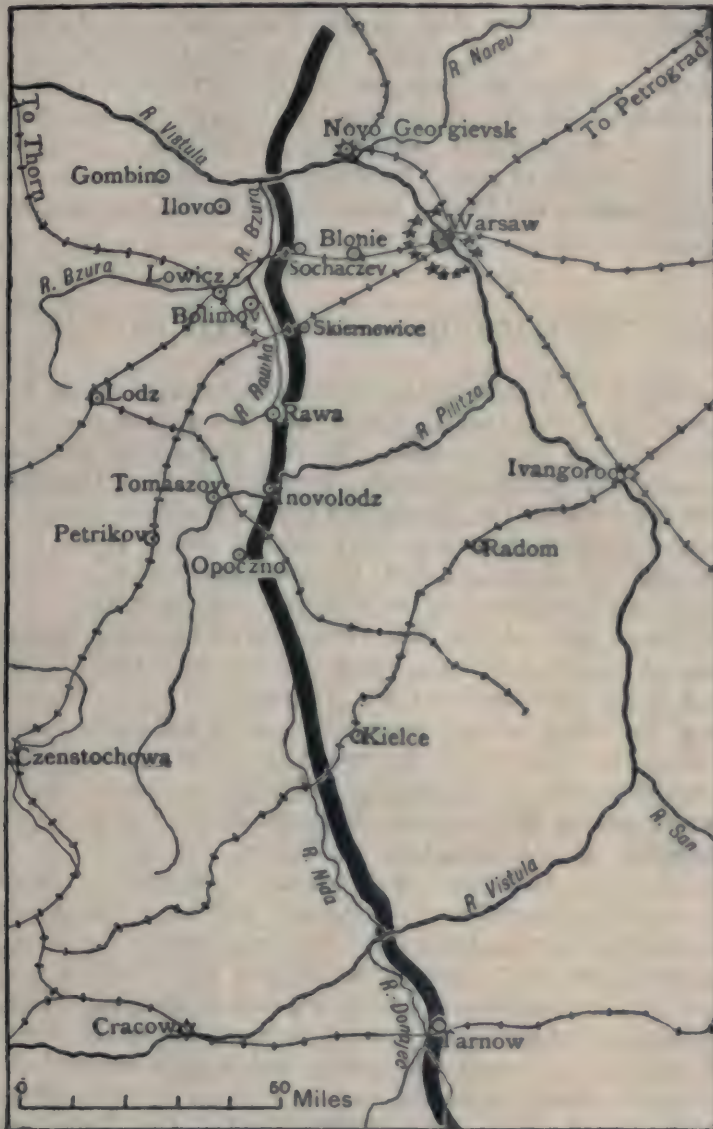
This conclusion only penetrated the Germans when driven in by the hard logic of facts. The Bzura was held by Siberian troops. In all the world it is difficult to find the equal of these men. Some of their heroic exploits have been already described; all of them will never be known. Self-reliant, cool, and strong, they leaned less to the bayonet attack than their ordinary Russian brothers. They were first-rate soldiers, with a just appreciation of the deadly qualities of cool and sustained fire. The Germans learned of this by experiences which are almost without parallel even in this most terrible of wars. Time after time small massed bodies attempted to carry the line of the Bzura. The river runs between 100 feet and 150 feet in width, amid generally high and wooded banks. Pontoons were thrown across in the darkness of night, and the Germans rushed to the opposite bank. Then a glaring searchlight blazed upon them, and they were mowed down. At times small bodies actually reached the eastern bank. This was the case at Sochaczew; but all that remained of the heroic band were again shot down or taken prisoner. The attacks seem to increase in intensity and frequency towards Christmas. They were made at other points in the line, too. At Bolimow and Borzymow, on the Rawka, there were bloody encounters on the days before Christmas. Farther south, at Inowlodz, on the Pilica, east of Tomazow, where Ruzsky's army linked with that of Ivanoff, heavier forces were engaged. The German assaults saw the year out, but achieved no success except about Kielce, where Ivanoff fell back a little. So far from forcing a decision were they, indeed, that the end of the year saw the Russians established over the Bzura. If they had wished it, they could have taken the offensive here; but winter was a sufficient reason for desisting, as the Germans were losing daily in their persistent assaults. The losses on the Bzura-Rawka front alone have been estimated at between 150,000 and 200,000.

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Hindenburg had aimed at crippling the Russian offensive for a long time. His chief end was to save Silesia, and in that he had succeeded; but otherwise his object



was far from being realised. Instead of making it impossible for the Russians to resume the offensive the Russians had immobilised the Germans. Between the Vistula and the Dunajec was amassed a huge German force, depleted and badly shaken. In the terrible rigours of a Russian winter in the trenches, they suffered



Russian Position at Christmas from the Bzura to the Upper Vistula.

much more than the enemy they had thought to defeat. The Russian Staff had still the power of manœuvre on two fronts. They were favourably situated for a move into East Prussia; and Brussiloff's army in the Carpathians, checked for the moment, was ready to move forward at the word of command. An Austrian force, under Dankl, attempted to create a diversion in favour of the Germans, by crossing the

Nida near its junction with the Vistula, but it had short shrift. A small Russian force swam the icy river and took the Austrians in flank. They did not escape until they had paid heavily for their temerity. A more formidable movement was that of Boehm Ermolli, the Arab-Austrian commander, in the Carpathians. His line had been carried to the railway which supplies Novo Sandec, on the Dunajec, from Eastern Galicia. Boehm Ermolli attempted to dislodge Dimitrieff from the defensive position he had taken up along the Dunajec and its tributary Bialla. For some days a heavy action was joined upon the river line, but a day or two before Christmas the Russian victory was complete, and Boehm Ermolli lost between 30,000 and 40,000 men with a number of guns. By this time Brussiloff was once more on the move in the Carpathians, and Boehm Ermolli's line to the east soon felt the force of his attack.

## X. THE SECOND INVASION OF EAST PRUSSIA.

THE district north of the Vistula can conveniently be treated as one region for the purposes of war operations, though it falls into two distinct regions: the East Prussian and the North Vistula region. In East Prussia the Germans were inevitably interested nationally, politically, sentimentally; in the North Vistula region, the district between the Vistula and the Soldau-Novo Georgievsk railway, they were interested chiefly from a military point of view. It was a flank of the Polish armies, and any advance towards the south-east meant a menace, more or less direct, to the communications of the army operating in Poland.

From the Russian point of view East Prussia, as we have seen, was a flank to be cleared, a zone of necessary military operations, besides a field where the enemy could be struck at his most sensitive spot. The Germans inevitably wished to clear East Prussia of the enemy without necessarily having any ulterior object, such as forcing the line of the Niemen. In the second month of the war Hindenburg had written off a good portion of the prestige he gained in clearing East Prussia by sending Schubert against the Niemen. After Schubert's failure the command of the 8th Army was given to General Otto von Below.

It was to play upon Germany's most sensitive feelings that Russia advanced into East Prussia during the winter. The Russian Staff knew that at a certain point they could compel the Germans to concentrate heavy forces in that area, and such a concentration would relieve the rest of the Russian line. Until it was done they could repay in East Prussia some of Germany's debt to Belgium. They could not have had any intention of advancing towards Germany during the winter, since the lines of such advance in Poland and Galicia had become entrenched areas, and travelling would necessarily be so bad that an advance in force would be almost impossible. This is not to take into account the fact that Russia was short of munitions, and was blockaded by Turkey and winter, so that her munition supplies could not be reinforced.

The Russians had forced their way into East Prussia during the winter. By 23rd December they held even the southern section of the Masurian lake area. Over the rest of East Prussia they moved in a manner which must have been a source of violent irritation to the East Prussian Junkers. They seem to have become established over the borders from the east of Goldap in a line stretching south-



west. They penetrated as far as Lotzen, some forty miles from the frontier, a town almost in the heart of the Masurian lake district. They had in fact forced their way to the German defensive line in this region. The Russian line, the Niemen, and the line to which Russia had penetrated in East Prussia were alternately the scenes of violent struggles. The Russians, worsted in their attempt to force the East Prussian line in August, were compelled to march back over the deadland between that and their own line. There the Germans met defeat and marched back again. And so the struggle ran. The East Prussian line ran from Tilsit, through wood and marsh, to about Insterburg, thence along the Angerap and the line of the Masurian lakes to Johannisburg. Thus far the line was one of great strength and stability. Its continuation from Johannisburg through wood and marsh and lake to Thorn is as strong, but not so stable, since the opportunities for offensive action are increased by the stronger railway system in the Allenstein-Soldau neighbourhood, where the East Prussian area merges into the North Vistula area.

In the East Prussian area the Russian army may be taken to have forced its way to the main defensive line up to the Königsberg-Kovno railway. Towards the end of January they began to move in a more northerly direction than they had previously attempted. There had been skirmishes over most of the East Prussian area during the month. On the 27th the Russians defeated the Germans near Pilkallen, a small town and railway junction on the Tilsit-Stallupönen railway line. At the same time a Russian cavalry force crossed the frontier farther north and destroyed the railway station at Pogegen, which lies but a few miles from Tilsit, on the north of the Niemen. Pushing up from Pilkallen they occupied Lasdehnen, a railhead from Pilkallen. Tilsit, the most famous town in the neighbourhood, was thus threatened from the north and from the south. Politically, the capture of Tilsit would have been extremely important; but probably, as ever, the military advantage attracted the Russian Staff. If Tilsit were to be taken the Germans would almost certainly be driven to make an attempt to recapture it, would settle a German force at a great distance from the main mass and, therefore, so far place them in a position of danger.

These operations were carried out by the 10th Russian Army, under General Baron Sievers, and up to a point they seem to have been pressed with skill and discretion. The force consisted of some 160,000 troops, and during the advance there were not more than two-thirds that number to oppose them. It was their function to make some sort of venture, since behind the East Prussian frontier the communications were not sufficiently organised to carry reinforcements in face of a sudden attack by heavy odds. And it was just these odds which it was meant the army should attract. The problem of the 10th Army was then to press an advance into country which nature had made treacherous with every trap of marsh, river, lake, and wood, and which artifice had made most powerful for a defence by a highly organised system of railways. Sievers had to advance, but not too far; to advance, but in such order that he could fall back as a body and not as a collection of units, if threatened by a sudden onslaught. Winter had made his problem even more difficult by covering the roads deep in snow. Everything called for skilful handling and careful Staff work.

But when the full winter had set in the task would be lightened, since the lake and marshes would lose their terrors. Hindenburg had, by his personal influence, prevented the drainage of the district before the war, since he saw what a perfect

defensive screen it formed ; but nothing could prevent winter freezing lake and hardening road until the screen became valueless. To prevent the Russians taking advantage of this improvement in their chances, Hindenburg must strike sometime about the beginning of February. This presented itself as a most fruitful plan from the fact that the same agencies which robbed the Germans of their barrier in East Prussia robbed Russia of hers. The Niemen once solid might be crossed and the river line turned.

Towards the end of January large German forces were gathering in East Prussia for a counter-attack. These may have amounted to three times the Russian force of invasion, some 400,000 men perhaps. They were drawn from odd corners. One corps came from the West, three from the Warsaw front, two came to make their first acquaintance with war (the first trained recruits) ; the rest were the troops which had held the country in the face of the 10th Army. The Grand Duke knew the Warsaw front was being weakened, but it did not at the moment seem feasible to advance on that section which had shown itself to be so well fortified. So Hindenburg was allowed to prepare his blow without any advantage being taken of the makeshifts devised to forge it. Yet, it must not be supposed that the place where the blow was to fall or the real dimensions of the force involved were known. There can be no doubt whatever, that if these had been known the Grand Duke would have withdrawn the 10th Army to positions which would have equalised conditions better.

That the line was being weakened about Warsaw the Grand Duke knew by sure signs, and it was made quite certain by a successful stroke at the end of the first week in February, which placed the Russians across Bzura at its mouth. That they had not gone far, had not in fact gone to East Prussia, the Germans tried to conceal by opening up a violent attack upon Borzymow, though, of course, this attack had its own place in the German winter campaign, as we have seen. Its order in the general plan, not its existence, was designed to conceal the real meaning of the redistribution of the German forces.

The attack did not, however, blind the Russian Staff, though the fact that some of the troops from this front had gone to East Prussia did not reveal the German plan. General January was destined to break down and change the character of defences in the Eastern theatre, and it was this which made the attack on Borzymow and Vola Szydlowska possible. With the approach of the freezing season the Bzura-Rawka river line defending Warsaw would be changed somewhat, and foreseeing this the Russians withdrew to the eastern bank of the Rawka and took up positions between two and three miles east on a line Borzymow-Vola Szydlowska. Trenches here were dug close together and siege conditions reigned. At the beginning of February the Germans opened a fierce attack on this front. A huge concentration of guns had been made against a section of from five to seven miles, and after a heavy bombardment with gas shells, densely massed attacks were delivered against the Russian lines. For days the lines oscillated ; but the character of the struggle was ever the same. Ever terrible German losses—it could not have been otherwise—and not sufficient results were gained. The Russian losses, even under such a fierce bombardment, were probably not half of the German losses. On 2nd February it is a small German success ; lost the following day. On 5th February it is again a German day : the attack worked up by a terrible crescendo all night, but on the following day the turning-point came. On 7th February the Russians



forced the Bzura at its mouth and the Rawka at its mouth, and the following day reduced the German positions at Vola Szydlowska. The Germans, compelled to redistribute their forces in the face of the Russian offensive, abandoned the attempt to break the Russian line, and the fighting died down.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the first week of February, when the world was intent on the struggle at Borzymow, the northernmost Russian corps was over the Königsberg-Kovno railway, between Tilsit and Insterburg; another (the 20th), south of the railway, lay along the Angerap, in front of the Goldap; a third continued along the Angerap and the line of the lakes to about as far south as Lötzev; and a fourth held the south to Johannsburg. The country lay in deep soft snow. In some places there were heavy snowdrifts, which checked road and rail traffic and forbade all motor transport. The Germans, however, had prepared thousands of sledges and sledge-runners. About 4th February the Russian commander got wind of what was afoot, and began to prepare for a rapid retreat. This fact, confirmed by German reconnaissance, seems to have caused the Germans to anticipate the offensive, which apparently was timed to take place at the moment when the weather conditions were even more in their favour. The German Staff meant to annihilate the 10th Russian Army, under the general policy of dealing a succession of crushing blows such that the Russians might be brought to reason.

On 7th February the Germans drove back the southern end of the Russian line, occupied Johannsburg and forced their way towards Lyck. Their strategy seems to have been much the same as that of Tannenberg. They attempted an envelopment, first striving to outflank the retreating force from the south. But the retirement was well carried out by the 26th Russian and 3rd Siberian Corps, and was covered by counter-attacks from Osowiec and Kovno. The counter-attacks checked the advancing Germans sufficiently to enable the two threatened corps to reach the line of the Bobr in good order and with certainly no greater losses than those suffered by the Germans. The northernmost corps, the 3rd Russian, was attacked on the 8th by a force, vastly superior, which almost immediately threatened to outflank it. The correct behaviour in face of a flank attack is to refuse the flank—that is, to draw back the line in the direction towards which the attack is directed. Thus, the blow coming from the north and north-west, the corps should have fallen back towards the south-east, the rest of the line conforming. Such an operation is a perfectly safe manœuvre. The attack on the Ourcq, during the Battle of the Marne, and the movement against Mackensen before Warsaw in October are two instances in which the armies, so threatened, suffered no heavier loss than was inevitable in a violent attack, and they saved themselves from a local or general disaster. If the 3rd Army Corps had followed the obvious tactics of the moment, there can be hardly any doubt that the Russians would have extricated themselves from a difficult position without any greater loss than the Germans suffered.

There was one alternative, and the 3rd Corps took it. It fell back towards the north-east on Kovno. It first seems to have attempted to head off the flank attack. To do this it had to extend its line and eventually face towards the south-west instead of north-west. It succeeded in saving itself, but let the Germans into the gap which it had made between itself and the next corps to the south, the 20th. Its own course was not over happy, since it uncovered its left or southern flank, and had to retreat hurriedly to avoid envelopment. The 20th Corps, under the command

of General Bulgakoff, was falling back towards the south-east on Suwalki, when it thus found a German force on its northern flank and forcing its way round to the rear. The retreat, under such conditions, became a terrible ordeal, and under it General Bulgakoff showed himself a fine soldier and a hero. Without uncovering the right of the 26th Corps, immediately to the south, the corps fell back fighting



The "Winter Battle" in the Masurian Lake Region.

against an almost complete envelopment. It was forced to retreat into the Augustowo woods and marshes. With hardly any food, in terrible weather, with failing ammunition, it fought its way step by step. In the woods the corps inevitably became disorganised. A hundred fierce encounters took place; hand-to-hand fighting, which the Russian moujik loves, became the order of the day. Although vastly outnumbered and out-munitioned the heroic men fought on. Little bands here and



there, surrounded, fought to their last cartridge, and, half-starving and disheartened, gave in; but the toll of prisoners was not made up of large detachments.

The gallant corps was thought to be lost completely. The usual highly coloured German reports were issued which annihilated not only the corps but the whole 11th Army. But, as a matter of fact, only a quarter of Baron Sievers's army was lost—a sufficiently big proportion without a doubt, but not what the Germans claimed; \* and when the Russian counter-attack was launched on its course, its ranks were swelled day by day by little bands of men from the 20th Corps. On the 23rd there emerged from the forests the 29th Division, which had marched sixty miles through the woods since the 11th, constantly harassed as it made its way through the deep snow by the advancing Germans. They had succeeded in fighting their way right through the trackless forests to their own army. By such deeds of superb heroism and enlightened leading Russia constantly atoned for her handicaps and mistakes. This battle, sometimes called the Battle of the Masurian Lakes, has been represented as a second "Tannenberg"; but the stakes and the losses were of a different order.

The Germans had driven the Russians out of East Prussia and struck them a heavy blow. But it is doubtful if the moral colour of the retreat did not outbalance the actual loss in men. It had been paid for, of course, and the balance was not so terrible as it looked. The Russians had fought well; and the Germans must also have lost heavily. The Germans forced their way to the Niemen, some ten miles south of Drusskeniki, where they had attempted to force the river line in September. But this was the only place where they reached the Niemen. A small force reached the right bank on 24th February, only to be thrown back on the following day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, there had been sympathetic fighting in the zone which we have called the North Vistula region. This is the triangle which has its apex at Novo Georgievsk, and its base on the East Prussian frontier. The eastern side is the railway from Novo Georgievsk to Soldau, and the frontier cuts the line about midway between Soldau and Mława. The western side of the triangle is the river Vistula, which crosses the frontier near the fortress Thorn. The base line would measure some seventy miles if it had been drawn straight between Thorn and Soldau; but the frontier winds in and out though it is well served by a railway line. The Vistula side of the triangle is about 100 miles long, apart again from the windings of the river course; and the opposite side, much straighter, is about 60 miles in length. These dimensions are sufficient to give some idea of the extent of what is a considerable area. It is a sort of deadland, served by no railways and bounded by the river, which is not fordable and seldom bridged. It marks off the Polish theatre from the East Prussian, of which, however, it forms a part, and it is chiefly notable and considerable in military operations as being a flank, either to operations in East Prussia, or to operations in Poland.

Though the first bridge, marching west from Novo Georgievsk, is at Plock, and no bridge could be held without command of a reasonable area on both banks, the region was of some real importance to both Germans and Russians in connection with the operations in Poland. At Włocławek the railway and the road on the left bank of the Vistula approach the river sufficiently near to be within range of heavy guns from the right or northern bank, and this fact gave a certain leverage to make

\* Ludendorff claimed 110,000; but this is an obvious exaggeration.

the German line fall back, if that were desired, and other expedients failed. Two sections of the right bank of the river were of importance : that from Warsaw to the mouth of the Bzura, to prevent the enfilading of the Russian lines ; and that from Thorn to some distance past Wloclawek, to prevent the German communications being cut. These sections were held by the Russians and Germans respectively.

In the last week in December the Russians had advanced in the eastern area of this region. Two days before Christmas they had driven the Germans back over a line stretching from Neidenberg to Lautenberg. A counter-attack towards Mlawa in the new year was checked, and in mid-January the Russian offensive was renewed, and was pressed over the whole of this region, the Russian aim being to strengthen the flank of the East Prussian army and to create a diversion. An advance north of the Soldau-Novo Georgievsk railway from Ostrolenka on the Narev, was accompanied by a movement which resulted in the occupation of Sierpiec, some forty-five miles from Thorn, on the river Skrw. The advance was pushed with vigour, and by the 19th they had reached Dobryzn, a few miles north-west of Plock, thus establishing a position which was a direct threat to the German left flank in Poland. Three days later the Russians were within thirty miles of Thorn, and motor traffic had been resumed between Warsaw and Plock.

But the fate of this advance was inevitably linked with that of the Russian army in the main East Prussian theatre, and by 4th February that had begun preparations for a speedy retreat. A victorious German army north of the Novo Georgievsk railway would have been a direct threat to the Russian army operating below that line, and hence, in sympathy with the retreat to the north, the troops in the North Vistula triangle began to fall back. By the middle of February, despite the German advance to the north, they were still on the Skrw, having fallen back some ten or fifteen miles from their most advanced point. The next day they had fallen back upon Raciaz, the southern flank pivoting about Plock. Two days later they were fighting near Plonsk.

The army north of the Soldau-Novo Georgievsk railway line had fallen back towards the Narev and Bobr. The heavy German concentration in East Prussia undoubtedly aimed at clearing the province thoroughly, and of dealing such a blow upon the invaders that they would not be so anxious to try conclusions with them again. To ensure a complete success in East Prussia obviously they had to clear the flanks. A Russian army at Lipno, or unoccupied troops at Pultusk, Ostrolenka, Lomza, the Narev fortresses, and Oswiec, the Bobr fortress, would be formidable threats to any attempt at annihilating an army to the north. A sudden blow towards the north might cut the communications of the German army, and its plight would be the reverse of favourable. It was probably this which caused the movement towards the Narev and Bobr, and not primarily an attempt to force the line of the rivers. To be reasonably sure of this we have only to bear in mind the comparatively small forces engaged and the great strength of the defensive line.

From the mouth of the Narev at Novo Georgievsk to where the Augusta canal joins the Niemen with the waters of the Bobr, is a continuous water barrier. The Narev has the three formidable fortresses of Pultusk, Ostrolenka, and Lomza, and the Bobr, Oswiec, which covers the Lyck-Bialystok railway. The marsh land which guards the course of the Narev and Bobr is a strong defence except in the hardest part of winter. But no season can detract from the real defence of the river line—a splendidly developed railway system. The railway which runs from



Warsaw to Petrograd, via Grodno and Vilna, forms a sort of chord upon which this shallow arc of water barrier with its fortresses stands. From the chord to the arc four railways run. Three converge in Ostrolenka and end there, and two of the three run close to the Upper and Lower Narev for some distance. This railway system was of more value to the Russian Staff than many additional troops, which they could not arm or provide with adequate munitions. It facilitated rapid concentration throughout the length of the river line. The Olita-Suwalki-Grodno loop line similarly protected the upper course of the Bobr. Further, while the Russian army could be reinforced with great rapidity the very reverse was true of any army operating to the north of the river line. Between the Soldau-Novo Georgievsk railway and the Lyck-Osowiec line there were neither railways nor good roads north of the Narev and the Bobr. It can be appreciated, therefore, that an attack upon so formidable a line cannot have been primarily the object of what, in effect, were minor forces.

At the time that fighting was taking place about Plonsk several German columns were operating in the region north of the Soldau-Novo Georgievsk railway, one attempting to break the river line towards Sucho Wolja, which lies near the junction of the Augusta Canal and the Bobr. Along the left bank of the river runs a ridge of wooded hills, but these are a strong defence only about Osowiec, and fall towards where the Germans with unerring skill were striking. The Germans were battering away at Osowiec with little success, since the Russian artillery was so well pleased to deal with it. The heavy siege guns, which had wrought so much havoc before in Belgium, were brought up, but some were put out of action, others prevented approaching to a good range, and all disturbed whenever they attempted to do any damage. Another German column marched against Lomza, and yet another against Ostrolenka.

After several days' fighting the Russians, with the position now well in hand, began a counter-attack. This was directed from about the Niemen fortress Olita to towards Plonsk. The German army to the north of Olita was falling back, having found no success. From about Sunno to Sopockinie the armies came into contact, and on the 27th they had fought and beaten Eichorn's army in the decisive Battle of Hill 1,005, near Sopockinie, a height which covers the whole of the neighbourhood. Its importance was rated so highly by the Germans that the 21st Corps lost nearly half its effectives in killed alone before abandoning their positions. This was the turning-point in the Niemen section of the campaign, and the Russians pushed a victorious if slow advance against the invaders. To the south affairs were reaching a climax.

The advance in this direction was neither easy to press in force nor easy to co-ordinate. Between the Lyck-Osowiec railway and that from Soldau to Novo Georgievsk there are no fewer than seven considerable transverse river courses, while, as we have said, the country is conspicuous for the lack of good roads and railways. These facts constituted its strength as a barrier against the Germans, and naturally operated both ways. Yet the Russians in part of this neighbourhood were in some force, and had advanced up towards the East Prussian frontier between Ostrolenka and Mława. The road system in this section centres in Przasnysz. On the extreme east of the section a road connects Ostrolenka with Myszyniec, which is just on the Russian side of the frontier; and on the extreme west a road from Novo Georgievsk follows and crosses the railway to Czechanov, thence to Mława

and on to Neidenburg. The area is really like a closed system banded by these roads, and the key to the system is Przasnysz. From Myszyniec a road runs to it ; from Mława another road runs to it ; and yet another connects Willenberg (in East Prussia) through Chorzele (just over the border in Russia) with it. These three roads, the Willenberg route being midway between the other two, form three formidable lines of advance. From Przasnysz, too, roads radiate to Czechanov, and thence to Novo Georgievsk, to Makov, and so on to the main road which runs from the Novo Georgievsk-Czechanov road along the north side of the Narev through Pultusk to Ostrolenka. Flanking the Chorzele-Przasnysz-Makov road ran the river Orzec, and in the river lay the hope, as later the undoing, of the Germans.

The Russian line had advanced to a position lying across a ridge below the Mława-Przasnysz road. So far as it went it was strong enough, but east of Przasnysz there lies a triangular area between the roads and the Orzec, which was an obvious invitation to a flank attack.

The Russian right lay on the town, and the general in command had not taken the trouble to continue it to the river which would have made him unassailable, except to a frontal attack or by an attack from across the Orzec, an operation much too dangerous to undertake without greater forces than those at the disposal of the Germans. The latter seized their opening ; a strong force was massed between Neidenburg and Willenberg and launched down the almost parallel roads to Mława and Chorzele. They meant to seize Przasnysz, and thus, with such an important centre in their hands, command the district. Already, in December, they had made one attack, and had carried the town only to be ejected once more. On 20th February they began their second attempt to take it. They made a strong demonstration against the Mława flank, but marched with the greatest speed along the Orzec. They knew that no considerable force lay on the east side of the river, and that the chances were that they could get round the Russian right flank, strike at the rear, and threaten the army with envelopment. The first part of their plan was completely successful. Before the Russian force could fall back the German troops had made their way to a point nearly a day's march to the south of Przasnysz. The Germans from this point marched due east and then north, and the town was almost completely enveloped before the attack opened simultaneously from the north and from the south. At the same time a skilfully pressed movement marched along the Orzec, seizing the crossings, so that the Battle of Przasnysz might be fought out without any chance of relief from Ostrolenka.

The attack on Przasnysz was urged with such violence that the town fell upon the 24th. Indeed, it could not be held against such forces in so advantageous positions. Simultaneously, with the attack upon the town from three sides, a general assault had been hurled against the whole Russian position from Mława to the east, and the situation became critical. It seemed as if the Germans were to annihilate this force as they had unsuccessfully attempted to annihilate so many others.

But if the first success had been gained by the exercise of the characteristic German gifts, the redemption of the situation and the turning of it into a success in favour of the Russians were secured by the exercise of the familiar Russian qualities. The Germans had gained the advantage by decisive action made with the utmost speed ; the situation was turned into a Russian success by the extraordinary power which the *moujik* has of standing up against any attack, and of moving with the utmost coolness under conditions which would stampede almost any troops in the



world. Add to this the characteristic Russian subtlety of action, and one can see the battles about Przasnysz as the strife of opposing spiritual forces. It is a true generalisation that the Germans gained their successes by the faults \* of their opponents ; but the Russians won by more resourceful generalship.

The situation of the Russians was critical. But on the day they were driven from Przasnysz the thrust from across the Orzec came and brushed aside the resistance of the 36th German Division at Krasnosielce as though it had not been there. A protection which does not protect seems of little value, and it is not clear why the crossing at Krasnosielce was not made impossible to force, or, if that could not be done in the required time, why the 36th Division was not sent due east to complete the discomfiture of the Russian army. With the appearance of an army across the Orzec the German position in turn became critical. They were south of Przasnysz, but now another army was pushing its tentacles south as well as north and east of it. The Germans claimed by the success of the 24th to have taken 10,000 prisoners and 20 guns. During the 25th a terrific battle raged over this



Scene of the Fighting round Przasnysz.

region, and the evolutions became very confused. As a result, however, the Germans were thrown back upon the town, where they were almost surrounded. On the following evening the Russians drove the Germans out of the town, but were unable to hold it against a counter-attack during the night. On the 27th they regained possession of the town and threw their right wing north and eastward with such energy that the Germans fell back towards the frontier.

It seems clear that some of the new German formations were thrown into the mêlée here. At one time the plan of the battle would have shown something like three concentric arcs, the innermost being the bent Russian line, the next the German army, and the third the Russian relieving force. The war has proved that the Russian soldier retains his philosophy in almost any circumstances, and, further, that many of the Russian units are practically unconquerable. Hammer them as one will, they fight on with extraordinary stolidity. The exploits of the 20th Corps are

\* Ludendorff's account of the Battle of Tannenberg represents it as a gamble, in which the decisive factor was Rennenkampf's failure.

sufficient evidence of this ; and the same qualities it was which kept the Russian army from Mława to Przasnysz from disintegration under the flank and rear attacks of 24th February. With the same admirable coolness they fought the involved engagements of the four succeeding days.

But the new German formations do not seem to have been able to stand the stress of the terrible conditions. Amid the hail of shells falling from all sides, at least a portion seem to have lost their nerve. Certainly signs of disorganisation were observed, and before the Germans fell back 10,000 prisoners were in Russian hands. The Russians pressed up to the East Prussian frontier, and all that remained of the elaborate German offensive was a small entrenched army hurling a spasmodic, never very accurate and never formidable bombardment against the fortress of Osowiec. That the Germans could maintain their position was due to the fact that their lines were supplied by the Osowiec-Lyck railway, and that it did not seem worth while to use the force which would have been necessary to dislodge them.

So in this quarter of the Eastern front the German offensive had been fought to a standstill. It had been launched with apparently everything in its favour. There were concentrated in East Prussia for its inception over 400,000 men, against whom, in the main area, there were not more than 160,000 Russians, and in total were not more than 250,000. The Germans had taken the Russians by surprise, and, owing to the bad Staff work of the 10th Army and its poor communications, had thoroughly hammered two army corps ; but in following up the attack they had had no success of any value.

In the southern area they had again caught a Russian army at a disadvantage, and hammered it, only to be caught themselves and as thoroughly dealt with. Below the Soldau-Novo Georgievsk railway they had driven back the Russian advance, but had been checked as soon as their advance began to prove useful to the German armies in the Polish area. Indeed, balancing up accounts, it is difficult to see how the Germans had gained any advantage beyond clearing East Prussia. They had not prejudiced the Russian strategic position. At the end of February that was substantially as strong as ever—as strong, that is, for offensive purposes. Neither had they dealt the Russian army one of those terrible blows which were to compel Russia to sue for peace. If the wastage was equal, then the result of this ambitious German offensive was a victory for Russia, since her resources are so much greater. Any inequality in the losses was counterbalanced by the great superiority in man power, a fact which no doubt led to the wasteful use of the Russian troops.

## XI. THE RUSSIAN MARCHING FLANK.

GALICIA, as we have seen, was of prime importance to the Russian plan of dealing with the enemy. It is the gate of Silesia for one thing, and an army established in Western Galicia is a serious menace to the great industrial centre of Silesia, and is admirably situated for a direct march into that country. But it is also the gate of Hungary, and no army which has not a certain secure hold over Galicia can safely undertake the invasion of Hungary. Yet, from the nature of the case, an army cannot entrench itself securely across Galicia, since entrenchments cannot be made across mountains. As soon as the entrenched line left the plain it began to be more



mobile and weaker, and a line attempting to cross the Carpathians could not escape being vulnerable at a hundred points. A strong enemy force assembled at any one of these numerous points could prove a most serious menace to the whole Russian position. A breach might be effected in one part of the line and the fate of the whole line would lie in the balance.

From the Dunajec to the Bukovina ("the country of the beeches," as the word means), the easternmost province of Austria-Hungary, the line of an army would have to cover some three hundred miles, a vast extent for a line which could not be entrenched, and which, moreover, had numerous points where it was, so to say, worn thin by mountain passes. It is easy to take the fighting which occurred on this front too much for granted. One hears of movements here and movements there, but the fact does not strike home that the positions could hardly escape being precarious at all times, and especially so during the winter months. It was in the Bukovina that the first moves of the winter campaign took place, and the whole of the operations, though they never involved any but minor forces, are of very great interest and importance.

The chief interest of the Bukovina comes from its position. The Russian province of Podolia runs up to the Rumanian frontier, which from this point makes two step-shaped advances westward into Austria-Hungary. On the more northerly of the steps rests Bukovina; on the southern Transylvania. The strength of the Rumanian strategical position can readily be seen from these facts, and the additional one, that its territory joins that of Servia. Now, as it was known that Rumania, except the Court party—the reigning family being Hohenzollern—was in favour of intervention on the side of the Allies, the Bukovina is seen at once to possess an adventitious political importance. If Rumania wished to enter the ranks of the Allies a Russian advance through the Bukovina—that is to say, along a portion of her frontier—would perhaps be the last factor in producing a decision, since it would hold out the best position for intervention. If the Rumanian army, a highly trained and efficient, though not very numerous body, wished to join the Allies how better could it do so than by joining hands with a Russian force to sweep across Hungary.

Furthermore, the people of South-East Bukovina, as well as those of Transylvania, are largely Rumanian, and the liberation of their brethren, while not so poignant a cause as that of Italia Irredenta, was yet sufficiently alive and inspiring to suggest that if Rumania did join the Allies she would march into country where she might expect every help. That consideration, for the moment, concerned Austria-Hungary more than Russia, since it is fairly clear that the latter had no further intention in the operations of January than that of causing the Austrian force to spread out, and thus preoccupy itself with other quarters, while the Russian army was securing the Carpathian crests for an advance in force into the Hungarian plain. If Russia had meant to join hands with Rumania, or had even been seriously considering the political situation, she would hardly have put into the field such slight forces. The Austrian counter-offensive was by no means conceived in so small a spirit; and this fact marks the different point from which the Bukovina operations were viewed.

At the end of the year 1914 the Bukovina contained hardly any troops, though Czernowitz and Kolomea, seized in September, were still in Russian hands; but in the first days of the new year Russian troops began to march across into the angle of the step, the south-eastern corner of the province where the Rumanian stock is

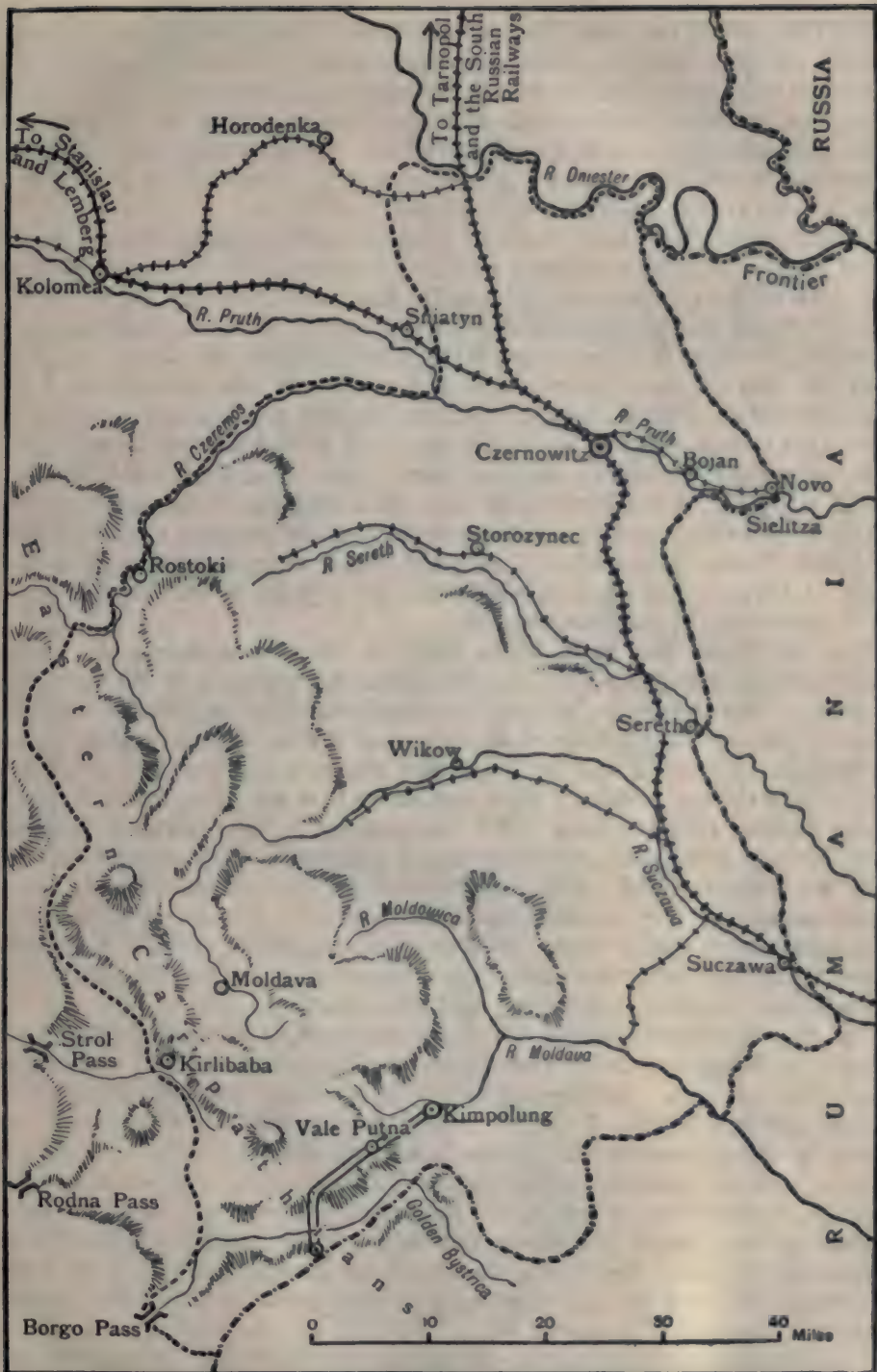
dominant. At the end of the first week in January the Russians had reached the mountains, which cut off the Bukovina from Transylvania. They had occupied Kimpolung, after marching through high mountain passes deep in snow between higher peaks. Ten days later, after an heroic march in the south-western angle of the province, they had occupied Kirlibaba, which stands about 3,000 feet above the sea-level, and from Kimpolung can only be reached by a road which winds along the foothills, now pointing south-west, now south, and finally almost due north. This advance had been made by almost continuous fighting, and after the occupation of Kirlibaba the Austrians were re-formed, a thin fringe of troops, and sent through the Borgo Pass, which lies due south of Kirlibaba Pass, to cut the railway and road by which the Russians had reached Kirlibaba. Part of the small force marched up the vale of the Golden Bystryca towards Kimpolung, while another detachment attacked the Russians at numerous points along the road after its turn to the north. On 21st January Kirlibaba was itself assailed, and the following day the other Austrian force had engaged a Russian force at Vale Putna, not far from Kimpolung.

The Austrian counter-offensive then began in force. The operations in Bukovina had been an affair of pawns. The Russian intention seems to have aimed at no more than creating a diversion. The advance had been conducted heroically, and the small engagements on mountain peaks in snowstorms were as gallant as any battles of the war, but they were minor play. The Austrian counter-offensive engaged at least an army corps (40,000 men or more), and under the command of General von Pflanzer-Baltin, generally known as Pflanzer, an able student of strategy. It was directed with great ability. Pflanzer intended to cut off the small Russian force that had adventured so far from support. His advance was pressed on a front roughly parallel to the main Carpathian ridges, his left moving towards Delatyn, and his centre on the Upper Sereth. His right and most easterly column was able to move only very slowly, and even the centre was held with some firmness, until the adventurous Russian detachment in the south-west had been delivered from the threat of immediate envelopment.

On 13th February the Austrian left lay on Delatyn, an important railway junction on the Pruth, and the centre was in occupation of Storozynek on the Sereth. The Russian force at Czernowitz continued to link up with that which had offered such hostages to fortune in the south-west three days earlier. Czernowitz was directly threatened by the Austrian advance, and it was the key to the whole position in the Bukovina and Rumania, for it was the centre of the railways leading into Russia, Galicia, the Bukovina, and Rumania. The Rumanian intervention would be put out of the question for the time if the Austrians took Czernowitz, since that would have driven a wedge between the Russian armies and those of Rumania. Russia, however, on 17th February evacuated the town and withdrew over the frontier.

**The Battles of the Passes.**—It is necessary now to turn to the western section of the Carpathian line. The same reasons which reduced the operations at Kirlibaba to the conflicts of insignificant units prevented all but slight skirmishes over the whole of the Carpathians during January. In the early winter operations of any magnitude are practically impossible in this area. The chief difficulty was that one had to grapple with a mass of adverse conditions, some requiring almost opposite treatment, which rapidly alternated. To scale a mountain slope when it is almost like glass with the hard frost is not so serious a difficulty as to be confronted one day with hard snow and frozen slopes, and the next to be compelled to wade through





slush. The roads in the passes resist all treatment. The transport which makes its way over the snow to-day can make no headway at all in the sea of mud to-morrow. Even if the transport difficulties were to be overcome, if the heights could be scaled, the position of troops is not greatly improved since it is practically impossible to remain concealed against a background of snow. The mere telling of such difficulties as these would seem to call for the sequel that no movements took place in the mountain area at all. But this is not the case.

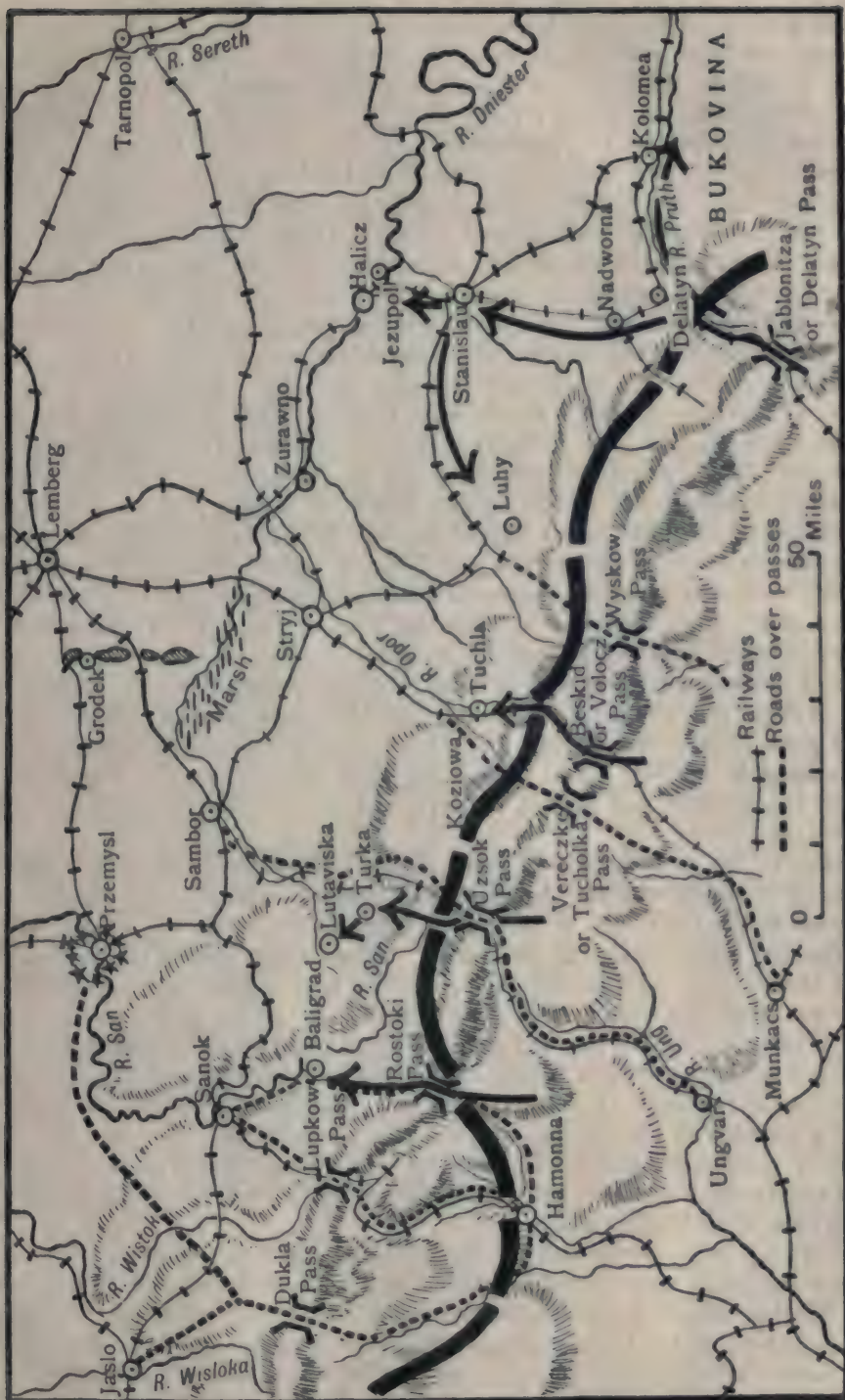
The Carpathian area is for military purposes really a series of areas, a series limited only by the number of passes over the mountains. On this five hundred mile front there are four railway passes: the Lupkow, the Uzsok, the Volocz, and the Jablonica Passes; and besides these chief passes, there are two other main passes: the Dukla and the Borgo, at opposite ends of the mountain chain. These are not the only passes, but they are the main ones, and each of them became the centre of a practically self-contained battle, owing to the great difficulty of preserving any connection between the troops operating in different passes—a difficulty laying a great responsibility upon the Russian Staff, since, of course, no sectional army could afford to be isolated in a pass. About forty miles from the Carpathian crests and on the road from the Lupkow Pass stood the loadstone of the Austro-Hungarian armies, Przemyśl, now besieged some two months. It was not cut off altogether from the Germanic armies. A fairly continuous aeroplane service was kept up, so that sorties might be synchronised with the Austrian advances.

From the Dukla Pass to Kirlibaba Pass, an extent of well over two hundred miles, hostilities were opened by the Austrians at the beginning of the fourth week in January. But the armies met with varying fortunes in the different sections of the line. Towards the eastern end the success of the enemy was greatest, presumably because the Russian Staff considered that that area mattered least. Certainly, their forces in the east were very slight, and, as we have seen, they fell back over the Russian frontier before a force which was pressing forward towards Czernowitz. The importance of the position on the Dunajec is sufficient explanation of the reason of the determination with which the Russians met the Austrian offensive in the western passes. If the Austrians could carry the passes and reach the Russian communications in Galicia, Dimitrieff would be compelled to abandon his positions on the Dunajec, and withdraw under a heavy disadvantage. Here the enemy, so far from achieving a success, was thrown back into Hungary.

The Austrian forces operated under the command of General Boehm Ermolli between the Dukla and Uzsok Passes, and from the Uzsok to the Wyszkwow under General von Linsingen. In three days from the opening of the offensive the Uzsok fell into Austrian hands. There are many reasons why this should have been selected for the heaviest attack. It was, first of all, probably the best pass through which to press an offensive, since it cut the Carpathian line into two almost equal parts. A successful blow struck up the pass could, if pressed with sufficient vigour, threaten and even imperil the railway lines which fed the western front on the Carpathians and preserved the unity of the armies operating in Galicia. If the railway line could be cut even for a short time the armies operating in the west would be cut off from those operating in the east.

It was but natural that a special effort should have been made to take this pass. That it was comparatively easy to take by superior forces and vigorous attack follows from the nature of the ground. It is a perfect example of the difficulties which





The Carpathian Battles.

mountain warfare can provide. It cuts between mountains some 500 feet to 2,000 feet higher than its level, and the positions about the pass are all open to the danger of being enfiladed. Further, the slopes are thickly wooded, and offer good cover for the concentration of a heavy force which, if the first steps proved successful, might even press its way to Przemyśl or Lemberg. By 26th January the Uzsock, after severe fighting, had fallen into the enemy's hands, and the Russians had fallen back to near the town Turka, which stands on high ground beyond the Stryj. Farther east they stood at Koziowa and Tuchla. At the head of the Wyszkw Pass they were able to hold the enemy farther south at Seneczow, where the pass issues from the foothills. Linsingen's German southern army operated here.

These positions were held against the most desperate attacks. The assaults on at least one of the positions seemed to have the febrile nature of those against Ypres, continuing for almost six weeks with varying intensity. At Koziowa there was much to attract the enemy to attack with violence. The greatest of the Trans-Carpathian arteries runs past Koziowa and within command of the position established there. The main road from Lemberg to Munkacs (in Hungary) through Stryj, which faithfully follows the railway, passes Koziowa. This artery, south of the town, traverses a hill called Lysa Gota, and falls into the valley of the river Orava towards the north—that is, towards Koziowa. Above that position, commanding it from wooded slopes which concealed their lines, the Russians had settled. Well protected themselves, they had a very fine field of fire. The Germans on 7th February, checked by the Russians at this point, attempted to rush the positions. They tried this manœuvre not once or twice, but over twenty times on the same day. Along the slopes of the hill, right up to the line of the woods in many places, the lines of dead grew thicker and thicker, but the desperate assaults went on. Russian troops cannot be rushed, but it took many days to convince the enemy of the fact, and the position was of such importance that the attacks went on regularly for nearly six weeks.

Farther to the east the enemy fared better. Three days before the Russians had evacuated Czernowitz the Austrians had pressed forward to Nadworna, some seven miles to the north-west of Delatyn. A formidable battle was waged between Nadworna and Kolomea for the next week. Pflanzer had opened the campaign in Eastern Galicia with considerable skill; but for it to achieve any success of real value it was necessary that the Austrians should seize the key points to the railway system in this area. Until this was achieved there could be no concentration of any great forces and no security of tenure against the inevitable counter-attacks. Czernowitz is one of the keys; Kolomea is another. Holding Czernowitz, Austria could prevent a junction of the Russian and the Rumanian forces. Kolomea was, however, more necessary. Czernowitz may be considered merely as protecting the flank of the Austrian advance, but until Kolomea was in their hands the life of their advance hung on a fragile thread.

These two points were secured by the Austrians. But the Austrian plan aimed at greater successes, and the battle which raged between Nadworna and Kolomea was designed to secure the junction of Stanislau, one of the most important railway centres in Galicia. Stanislau lies not more than twenty miles north of Nadworna, and, after a severe struggle, the Austrians entered Stanislau on 21st February. This was a very grave blow to the whole Russian line which lay to the west. As we have already seen, the Russians were there able to pin the enemy to the Carpathian foot-



hills ; but if the Austrians could make good their hold on Stanislau these positions would be impossible to maintain.

It is significant that neither the Russian nor the Austrian *communiqués* mention the capture of Stanislau. The Russians no doubt viewed the success as being momentary, and, indeed, the town was retaken on 22nd February, though it was not retained. But that the Austrians did not announce so important a success can only be attributed to their opinion that it was but a prelude to a more sensational *coup*. They meant to strike north towards Tarnopol, the capture of which would turn the whole Russian position in Galicia, and west to turn the immediate Russian positions on their left and threaten Przemyśl.

They did, in fact, strike north and west at once ; but even to the west, where their advantage was the greatest, they secured no decisive success. The Russians had the situation sufficiently well in hand to be able to detach troops from the Carpathian foothills to strike up to the north-east. On 25th February they recaptured Luhv, and as the days succeed one another, the Russian advance pressed consistently nearer to Stanislau. At Halicz and Jesupol the Russians still held the southern bridgeheads over the Dniester. Tarnopol was fading farther from the Austrian view with every day that the Russians were not dislodged, since along these avenues would issue reinforcements from the Russian bases. Until these bridgeheads were captured the Austrian position, even with Stanislau in their hands, was far from safe, for it depended upon the one railway line across the Jablonica Pass.

The Russian reinforcements were sent across the Dniester, and on 1st March the opposing forces, after many days of spasmodic struggle, came to grips below Halicz. The result was a complete victory for the Russians. This meant the end of the Austrian tenancy at Stanislau. Threatened from the south-west and from the north the Austrians were compelled to give way, and on 4th March the Russians once more took Stanislau. The campaign had proved disastrous for the Austrians. Even Stanislau was a minor thing compared with the loss of 153 officers and 18,522 men, 62 machine guns, and 5 guns ; and that was the price the Austrian army paid for their ten days in the town. They fell back on their former positions at Nadworna and Kolomea, and the operations ceased to have interest or importance. The whole campaign in this quarter had failed of its effect. The Russian position in Galicia had not been turned. Their grip upon the northern mouths of the passes had not even been shaken. Przemyśl was as closely invested as ever.

A more direct attack was initiated towards the end of the month against the Russian position in Western Galicia and against the besieging lines about Przemyśl. The Austrians knew, what the Allies did not discover till much later, how great a prize the fortress would be if it should fall into Russian hands, and hence their anxiety to leave no stone unturned to save it. On the last day of February renewed attacks were made from the Dukla to the Uzsok Passes. In the middle section some success was attained. The Austrians secured positions as far north as Baligrod and Lutaviska ; but there they were held. These positions were almost due south of the besieged fortress, and it must have been galling to have pressed so far and then to have been pulled up. It was a shrewd blow, which thus gained ground so far north of the Lupkow Pass.

A still more subtle blow was struck at the Russian position in Galicia, by an attack on the line where it leaves the Biala, and leaves the plain too between Cieszko-wice and Gorlice. That was, perhaps, the weakest spot in the whole line, since a

success there over even a small area would have forced the Russian line back from the Carpathians besides forcing the Russians to abandon their position on the Dunajec. This attack was promptly checked.

With every endeavour to turn the Galician position, to break the line, or throw it back frustrated, Przemyśl came to its last days. The Dukla Pass was in Russian hands before these last attempts to relieve the fortress, and under the stress of the renewed Russian offensive even points they had held for some time were recaptured. Towards the end of the third week in March the Russians were more strongly than ever established on the Carpathians. This is a point well worth remembering. In the dark days of May and June, when victorious Germanic armies pressed the Russians out of Galicia, it was forgotten that for nearly three months of the winter they had withstood every attempt to move them. Only the smallest and most temporary success was gained. The position which, as we have pointed out, was necessary for the marching flank of the Russian armies was preserved intact.

Over the whole Russian front there had been the fierce clash of arms during the winter. But when Przemyśl fell the balance on the whole clearly lay with the Russians. They had been compelled to retreat from East Prussia, but had, in the series of battles which followed, avenged themselves for the discomfiture of the heroic 20th Corps. Before Warsaw their positions were secure and their losses were not greater than those of the enemy. In the south, after attempts all along the line, when every joint of their armour had been tested, they emerged with sufficient *sang-froid* to receive the surrender of Przemyśl as though it had been merely the recapture of Stanisław.

## XII. THE EASTERN FRONT IN WINTER.

THE essential difference between the Austro-German strategy on the Western and Eastern fronts has already been pointed out. The German Staff looked for a decision on the Western front. The "battle without a morrow," in the picturesque phrase, was to give Germany a final dominance over France of such crushing weight that Germany, even if she could not succeed in making her a vassal state, need never again regard her with any anxiety. With regard to Russia, the German aim was very different. She must, of course, prevent Russia invading any of the sacred German territory. That was assumed. But to defend her territory and that of her ally from invasion the German Staff, faithful to theory, intended to attack their enemy with great violence, and proposed to inflict upon her a number of crushing blows, which would prevail upon her to see the desirability of coming to terms with Germany.

Now the end of the year saw the Russian forces established in Western Galicia, through Poland, and over the frontiers of East Prussia. In Poland alone had Germany secured any success. Although Russia held little of East Prussian territory, she had in her hands two-thirds of Galicia. The fact that Germany held a large part of Russian Poland could not be considered as writing off these tangible Russian successes. Germany, it is true, was strongly entrenched across Poland; but that very fact means that Russia was also settled in strong positions.

Russia, entrenched from the mouth of the Bzura to the mouth of the Nida, in a chord across the arc of the Vistula, could hold the line of the Dunajec and Biala to



the Carpathians. From the mouth of the Bzura to a little below Tarnow on the Dunajec the positions were entrenched and continuous. To the north the line of the Vistula flanked and protected the Polish front ; to the south the Biala entered the foothills of the Carpathians, where entrenchment was practically impossible. Mountains cannot be entrenched. Small sections between local strong points can be strengthened by wire entanglements and breastworks, but always these are liable to be turned or enfiladed by a slight advance up the mountain side.

Somewhere about Tarnow, then, was a pivot about which the Russian line moved. It threatened to swing right across the Carpathians and across the plains of Hungary towards Buda Pesth. The line, at any rate, as soon as it struck hill country could not be any longer fixed. The farther west the pivot could be fixed the greater and the more immediate the threat to Buda Pesth.

Such were the strategic elements of the position. The line could not, without grave risk, be swept far beyond the line of the point upon which it pivoted. It would, naturally, be open to a flank attack, and it could not afford to add to the danger by exposing itself to the chance of having its communications cut. The Dunajec line, in fact, was essential to the immediate offensive of Russia.

For a merely defensive warfare, or even for the longer processes of attrition, Russia could afford—indeed it was her most straightforward strategy—to fall back into Poland north of Galicia and east of the Vistula line. The farther she moved into her own territory the greater the strain she imposed upon an invader. Long lines of communication stretching out in all directions, lines which would be of necessity motor or horse transport, since the sparse railways could not support the strain, would make tremendous calls upon the largest forces and the most triumphant organisation. When the Grand Duke chose to stand at the Vistula line he appears to have become convinced that the enemy forces available at the moment could be safely and conveniently encountered there, and that a Russian offensive would be possible much earlier than had been supposed. No doubt, too, faithful to the Franco-British, he felt that, unless he compelled the Germans to fight, they might be content to leave small forces against him and make another attempt to break through to Paris or to Calais. In fine, while the exigencies of a defensive war, or even of a war of attrition, would have been better served by a falling back still farther east into Poland, the offensive upon which Russia was intent depended upon holding an advanced position in Poland.

These conditions were not at all satisfied by holding the Vistula line. The line of the Vistula would not articulate with the Lower Dunajec. There is no need to labour this point. To hold the Lower Dunajec, upon which the Russian offensive turned, a position in advance of the Vistula had to be held ; and it requires little reasoning to discover that the only line which would link up with the Dunajec included the Bzura-Rawka position before Warsaw. It was a line of great strength, linking up with positions across to the Pilica, and along the Nida to about the mouth of the Dunajec. Behind the Bzura-Rawka position lay the much stronger Blonie line, but below that there lay no positions strong enough to bear any pronounced pressure short of the Vistula. With the Vistula the line of the San would have to be maintained, with Przemyśl as a nucleus for attacks to the north-east and north.

Bearing these things in mind a sort of coherence emerges from what seemed to be the tiny, disconnected and pointless attacks over the Eastern front. There is nothing particularly obscure in military science. It does not necessitate a new set

of qualities to understand, even if it does make extraordinary calls upon brain and character to wage a war. The greatest general of the war, Foch, reduced warfare to a clash of wills, and laid most stress upon its moral side.

When it is said that Hindenburg did not mean to take Warsaw by the attacks at Borzymow, or that he did not mean to force the Narev-Bohr line by the advance from East Prussia, nothing more is suggested than that such was not the object he had immediately in view. A starving man who thinks to catch a few dace to relieve his hunger will not bitterly complain if, with his primitive makeshift, he hooks half a dozen fine trout. So with Hindenburg; in striking a sudden and violent blow against the Borzymow-Vola Szydlowska position he undoubtedly aimed merely at throwing back the line to the Blonie position. It is known that other attacks were to be delivered if that first one had gained any success. The positions east of the Rawka were to be forced, and before the line could recover fierce blows farther south on the Pilica and at other places were to drive it back on to the Vistula.

Again, the advance from East Prussia and from Thorn were aimed at covering the operations farther north and at outflanking the line south of the Vistula. If Warsaw could be carried, Hindenburg would have been the last man not to have welcomed it, as he had undoubtedly fought so vigorously for it on two occasions. The operations in the Carpathians, which cleared Bukovina and at one time pressed as far north as Stanislaw, were all part of the one plan. The Russian line had about Gorlice, south and east of Tarnow, a weak section where it began to enter the Carpathian foothills. It was at a similar spot that the Austro-Germans struck in December; that section was to be attacked simultaneously with Borzymow but for the failure of the latter. And all the Russian line east of the Upper Biala was movable and strong by the very mobility which made it weak. Through the passes blows were to be struck to throw back the Russian line beyond the main artery, the Tarnow-Lwow railway, which kept the Galician position in being, or at any rate beyond the secondary artery, the single line through Sanok-Sambor and Stryj, which, until the fall of Przemyśl, was almost essential to the Galician position. If the Russian line could be driven north of one or both of these railways the Dunajec front could be turned and the Russians thrown back upon the San. It was some months before the Germans grasped that in Galicia lay the key \* to the Russian offensive and, indeed, to the Vistula line.

In the meantime, during the winter, the Austro-German offensive, apparently an incoherent, opportunist stabbing at any point that offered, was waged for a very definite end, and was no more incoherent or opportunist or non-essential than the massed attack upon Nancy in August, which was meant to take the Champagne armies in rear. The defeat of the different attacks as they came made them appear alternative and belated last resorts, instead of the cumulative blows which were to have broken the defence. Some were planned, but not followed up on the failure of the Borzymow attack; others, which were to have pressed home irresistibly the first success, were proceeded with as they might just possibly have succeeded in the main object alone, or because local conditions—as in East Prussia—called for them.

\* Ludendorff had realised it in September, but had thought that the Austrians might be able to cope with the problem.



## XIII. KING GEORGE AT THE FRONT.

ON Sunday, 29th November, the King set sail for France in order to visit his troops in the field. He was conveyed across the Channel in a destroyer, and it must have been anything but a pleasant experience since the night was one of that stormy character which only the perversity of the English Channel can contrive without any warning. It was an exceedingly bold thing to do, this risking of the dangers from German submarines, and it gave to the world a very convincing proof of the completeness of British naval control. But apart from these, so to say, antecedent results, the appearance of the King in France was joyfully acclaimed by the whole French people; and the security with which he walked about afforded a measure of the confidence with which the Allied armies regarded the situation in the West.

Arriving early on Monday morning, the King, who was met by the Prince of Wales, already some time with the troops, first visited the hospitals, chatting with the officers and men, taking an obvious interest in their condition and showing an extraordinary knowledge of the engagements in which they had been wounded. He spent some time in one of the hospitals for the Indian troops, and after talking with the men, made a very thorough examination of the kitchens and general arrangements. There was a certain delicate propriety about the choice of this first duty on his arrival in France, and history will see it in its true light.

After his visits to the hospitals the King proceeded to the headquarters of the British army in France, where he was saluted by a Guard of Honour, and was received by Field-Marshal Sir John French. On the following day, accompanied by Colonel the Maharaja of Bikanir and Major-General the Maharaja Sir Pratap Singh, Indian A.D.C.'s, the King paid a visit to the Indian troops. His motor car passed through several detachments drawn up in lines along the roads, who broke out into enthusiastic cheering. Indeed, on each of these days he was everywhere met by the greatest enthusiasm, not only among his British subjects, but also among the French. On arrival at the headquarters of the Indian troops he was received by General Willcocks, the General Officer commanding, who presented to him the Indian Princes, whose loyalty had carried them so far afield, and the Staff Officers. The British and Indian troops were then inspected, and the divisional headquarters were visited. The King insisted upon watching a detachment preparing the native food, and tasted a freshly cooked chapatti. Much enthusiasm was aroused when the King presented the decorations which had been awarded.

The 4th Army Corps was then visited, the King taking luncheon at the headquarters. At its conclusion His Majesty was welcomed to France by President Poincaré, M. Viviani, the Prime Minister, and General Joffre, the Allied Commander-in-Chief. The meeting was most cordial, and then a procession of fifteen motor cars was formed, headed by that of the Prince of Wales, for a further inspection of the 4th Corps. The King and M. Poincaré, passing in open motor car through lines of troops, were met by continuous cheering. They were much interested in the full "trench kits," the goatskin coats, woolly caps, and straw-filled sandbags for feet and legs. On the way back to headquarters one of the undesigned actions which have endeared the Prince of Wales to the troops took place. His motor car, going slowly along, passed a soldier, hatless and coatless, in the pouring rain. Finding the man had been left behind by a supply train, the Prince gave him his own waterproof coat

and took him in his car. On their arrival at headquarters the King invested General Joffre with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. M. Poincaré and M. Viviani dined with the King, General Joffre having to leave to resume his duties.

The Cavalry Corps and 3rd Army Corps were visited on Wednesday. After walking along the lines of the splendid cavalry men, the King distributed decorations at the headquarters of the corps. These were situated in an old château, and the King called upon the Baronne and delighted her by writing his name in a sixteenth-century volume. Luncheon was taken at the headquarters of the 3rd Corps, and at various points decorations were presented. Some charcoal burners showed the King the process by which they made charcoal on a large scale for burning in the trench braziers. A convalescent home was visited, and a large bathing establishment, where the men returning from the trenches in a filthy condition in every way are able to take a bath and secure a completely new change of clothing. This most necessary institution was well-organised and was much appreciated. On returning to headquarters the King received a number of distinguished French generals. General Foch, whose action in the Battle of the Marne had ended the resistance of the German centre, was invested with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. Generals Maud'huy, d'Urbal, and Conneau, whose cordial co-operation with the British contingent will ever be remembered, received the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, as did also Generals Mitry, Maistre, Dubois, and Grossetti; and the services of Colonel Huguet, Chief of the French Military Mission attached to the British Field Army, were recognised by the presentation of the Companionship of the Order of the Bath.

On the following day Field-Marshal Sir John French had the honour of being invested with the Order of Merit. The 1st and 2nd Corps were then visited, the King again bestowing decorations and chatting with the officers commanding units. This was at a point not far south of Ypres, and the dull roll of thundering shells could be heard and the smoke of their bursting seen on a ridge in the near foreground. Through lines of gleaming cavalry the King then rode, ever stopping as the eye caught the wooden crosses which mark the graves where his soldiers sleep their long sleep. The gleaming swords, the champing horses and cheering men amid these wooden crosses, the laconic inscriptions on which the King stopped to read, form a situation which it is not likely he will ever forget. The cavalry stretched along the tree-lined road for over a mile, and darkness had set in before the tour was completed.

It was on Friday that the most dramatic moment of the King's tour occurred, when he visited the King of the Belgians and took the salute as the heroic Belgian troops marched past. He had first paid a visit of inspection to the brain of the British army, the centre whence orders issue to all parts of the field, to which all information comes, to be digested and assimilated. The Army Signal headquarters, with its huge organisation of scientific apparatus, was typical of modern war, which tends more and more to express itself in terms of mechanics. Here were installed telephones, cables, wireless and wheatstone high-speed apparatus, which formed the nerves of the army in the field. Motor-cyclist dispatch riders were coming and going, and Sir John French drew the attention of the King to the splendid work performed by this new arm of the army. In the intelligence department officers were at work digesting the latest information and registering it on large scale maps. The changing position of the lines both of the British army and the French were



carefully marked, so that the situation might be accurately glimpsed at any moment. The catering department was visited, with its huge and intricate organisation, which had to deal with guns and jam and everything that kept the army vitally in being. Medals and decorations were there distributed, and then the King set out by motor car to visit the headquarters of the Belgian army.

The King of the Belgians met His Majesty on the frontier, and accompanied him to the Belgian headquarters. A strong force drawn up in the picturesque market-place was inspected by the King, and they then marched past. It was an historic situation. The King of the Belgians stood by King George as he took the salute. In the rear stood the Prince of Wales and the Maharaja Sir Pratap Singh and the Maharaja of Bikanir, oddly assorted units of nations and races. The King took luncheon with King Albert, and before leaving invested him with the Order of the Garter. Several other sections of the army were visited on the following day, the last being the Royal Flying Corps, whose members had ensured His Majesty's safety during the visit, carrying out a continuous patrol over the Royal procession everywhere.

The King left the headquarters at 2 P.M., having issued the following :—

#### SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY BY HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

" Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Men :—

" I am very glad to have been able to see my Army in the field.

" I much wished to do so in order to gain a slight experience of the life you are leading.

" I wish I could have spoken to you all, express my admiration of the splendid manner in which you have fought and are still fighting against a powerful and relentless enemy.

" By your discipline, pluck, and endurance, inspired by the indomitable regimental spirit, you have not only upheld the tradition of the British Army, but added fresh lustre to its history.

" I was particularly impressed by your soldierly, healthy, cheerful appearance.

" I cannot share in your trials, dangers, and successes ; but I can assure you of the proud confidence and gratitude of myself and of your fellow-countrymen.

" We follow you in our daily thoughts on your certain road to victory.

" GEORGE, R.I.

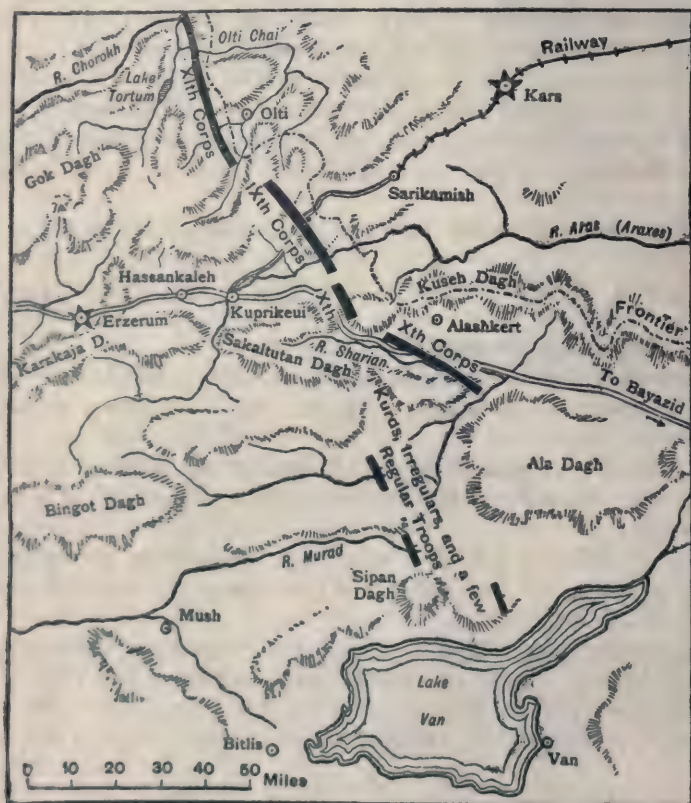
" General Headquarters,

" December 5th, 1914."

Since Agincourt the last king present with an army in the field was George II. The memorable visit paid by King George to his troops had great and far-reaching results. It set the seal upon the alliance of France, Britain, and Belgium, it gave an unmistakable pledge to the soldiers of the reality of the King's interest in their welfare, and quickened their enthusiasm to fight and endure.

## XIV. THE TURKISH DEFEAT IN THE CAUCASUS.

THE operations on the Russo-Turkish Caucasian frontier, so far described, were merely reconnaissances in force, but towards the end of November the main Turkish force began to take up its position. The fact that the Turks thus boldly entered upon a winter campaign in this most difficult country shows clearly enough that whatever the Turks lacked it was not courage. The value of a vigorous offensive in the Caucasus to the Central Empires scarcely requires elaboration. The German



Position of the Turkish Army on the Armenian Frontier.

Staff, which had been compelled at the beginning of November to recognise the failure of its general attack on Warsaw and the line of the Vistula and San, saw itself faced with the probability of a strong Russian advance through Galicia and Poland. The advance during November materialised with great swiftness, and in the German counter-offensive in the direction of Warsaw, which we have already followed, it was imperative to draw off as many Russians as possible from the point of attack. The Turkish offensive in the Caucasus was, then, to be a diversion which should attract to itself a sufficient force of Russians to enable the Germans and Austrians to deal their enemy a crushing blow in the main area.

At the end of the third week in November the Russians were for the second time



in possession of Koprukeui, which lies on the Erzerum road, where three Turkish army corps (the 9th, 10th, and 11th), some 120,000 men, had been lying for several weeks. These forces were increased towards the end of November by almost another army corps, part of the Bagdad Arab troops, and part of another Turkish corps, transported across the Black Sea to below the westernmost section of the Russo-Turkish frontier. The Turkish line was being extended and weighted towards the west, so that an opportunity might be given of a flank attack in a quarter whence it would not be expected.

The Russian pressure was being exerted along the road from Kars to Erzerum, the best road in the border country, and therefore the natural line of approach. The force which had pushed up to Koprukeui on this road was, on the Turks assuming the offensive, driven back to Khorosan, some fifteen miles from the frontier. This was achieved by a frontal attack by a Turkish force slightly superior to the invading army, which, all told, on this front could not muster more than two-thirds the number of the Turkish troops. During the fourth week in December the Turks pressed the Russians here, but the invaders would not relinquish their hold without a struggle, and the situation developed into a keenly contested struggle. It was all that the Turks desired. If they could hold the main force here it would give time for the left wing to thrust round the Russian right and threaten immediate envelopment.

The time was well utilised. The Turkish plan called for extraordinary courage and careful and skilful generalship. An enveloping army must keep its constituent parts in touch or they are liable to be taken successively and defeated in detail. Yet in mountainous country, the passes deep in snow and the tracks hidden from sight, the problem of intercommunication between the units of a force is almost insuperable. The Turks, however, continued to press their advance boldly and skilfully. By Christmas day two corps had forced their way through the mountains to Sarikamish, the Russian railhead from Kars, their concentration centre. The Russian position at this moment was critical, and if the operations had been carried out at manœuvres the decision must have gone to the Turks. Some thirty miles south of Sarikamish the Russian main force was held by the Turks; far away to the west the Turks were moving towards Ardahan, and between lay about 80,000 Turks almost in the rear of the Russian main force.

Four days after Christmas the Russians began to counter-attack. The 10th Turkish Army Corps, endeavouring to cut the Kars-Sarikamish railway, was driven west and south. On 1st January it was in full retreat, and although the Turks had taken Ardahan on the same day, they were driven out two days later. The Turkish position now became critical. In the retirement of the 10th Corps the 9th had been left struggling valiantly at Sarikamish. It was isolated, and Russian reinforcements coming up at once took the offensive in the most skilful fashion. Sarikamish itself had held out for several days against a most terrific onslaught by a strong Turkish force. The small Russian force at length abandoned the town, falling back under the impetuous attacks of a Turkish division. Behind them the Russian reinforcements were pressing up through the deep snow; and when they arrived the defenders were almost at the end of their resources, though they had not fallen back farther than three miles.

The Russians now applied the tactics which had failed so disastrously for the Turks; but in this case they proved completely successful. They sent troops east

and west of the 9th Corps at Sarikamish, and the Turks, seeing themselves completely surrounded, after a tremendous bombardment, gave in. With the 9th Corps and part of the 11th Corps were taken prisoner the General commanding, three divisional generals, the Staff, including the attached German officers, a vast amount of artillery, machine guns, and baggage animals. The attack had broken down under the terrible conditions in which it had been fought. The cold in the mountains was intense. Icy winds swept the passes. The roads were almost impassable, and the soldiers, driven on against such obstacles, half-starved through the breakdown of the commissariat, frequently became mutinous. Ill-clad, hungry, yet frenzied, the Turks had fought with the zeal of fanaticism; yet at times the kitchen conquered where the gun was powerless, and the Turks ran forward to surrender to the odours from the Russian field kitchens.

Part of the 11th Corps, as we have seen, fell with the 9th, and was either annihilated or surrendered. The remainder now saw itself faced with a situation calling for heroic self-sacrifice and the greatest skill. The 9th Corps out of action, the 10th lay at the mercy of the strong Russian force now set free. Unless it could be reinforced, or part of the Russian force diverted, it must share the fate of the Turks at Sarikamish. The 11th Corps determined to create a diversion. It attacked energetically, and succeeded in pressing the Russian column from Khorosan some ten miles nearer the frontier. Here, at Karai-Urgan, the Turks were able to develop a situation which made sufficient claim upon the Russian command to divert a considerable section of the force which was hastening to complete the discomfiture of the retreating 10th Corps. During the second week in January a fierce battle took place at Karai-Urgan; but after three days' struggle in a snow-storm, with the icy winds biting where the snow could not penetrate, the Russians compelled the Turks to fall back.

The intensity of the struggle seemed to take colour from the bitter weather. One whole Turkish regiment was destroyed by the bayonet, except the Staff, which surrendered. Terrible charges by the Siberian Cossacks drove home the Russian superiority, and with an increasing toll of dead compelled the retreat. At Yenikoi, west of the Erzerum road, the 11th Corps made a last stand. It had been harried in front and flank ceaselessly; its rearguard suffered the most terrible punishment. But at Yenikoi, although the Turks made a valiant stand for two days, they were driven to retreat in disorder, abandoning guns and baggage. The Russians had pushed the 1st Corps out of their positions in the extreme west, and had also well in hand the re-formed 10th Corps, which, towards the end of January, moved against Olty only to be thrown back. They were also pressing on towards Erzerum.

Meanwhile four other Russian columns were engaged in this neighbourhood. One had entered Turkish Caucasia west of Bayazid and seized Kara Kilissa, and later Dutukht, in the Alaschgerd valley. Here they were nearly surrounded in mid-December by a motley *ensemble* of Turkish reinforcements, but after a vigorous defence they were able to escape and fall back. Another column, which had occupied Bayazid on the slope of Mount Ararat, later linked up with a column operating from Persia. Two columns advanced into Turkish territory from Persia, and the reason for this use of neutral territory requires some explanation. The Turko-Persian boundary had been the subject of diplomatic discussion for half a century, and the Turks had been concerned in pushing their claim to as much as possible of north-eastern Persian territory. Persia, a helpless country, is only fit to be the prey of





The Campaign on the Caucasian Frontier. Inset: The Turkish Advance.

stronger nations ; for it is clear, that for either Russia or Turkey it might be a Belgium giving access to an unguarded flank.

At the outbreak Turkey was, in fact, in occupation of part of Persia to the west of Lake Urmia. Russia, on the other hand, in agreement with Britain, had relieved and occupied Tabriz, which had been besieged by Turkish troops. The neutrality of the Shah's dominions had therefore been violated already. In November, Russia sent two columns from the north of Lake Urmia over the passes into Turkish territory. At the beginning of December these had won victories at Serai and Bashkala and advanced towards Lake Van. Meanwhile a body of Kurdish tribesmen had been set in motion farther to the south. When, after occupying Tabriz, the Russians had sent a force to Khoi, the Turks had occupied Suj Bulak, a town some thirty miles south of Lake Urmia. This town became, apparently, a concentration centre for the Kurdish tribesmen, who marched north-east towards Tabriz. At Maragha, about halfway between Suj Bulak and Tabriz, the Kurds came into contact with the governor of the province, whom they forced to retire. The Kurds then pressed forward and occupied Tabriz on 13th January, from which the Russians had thoughtlessly withdrawn to press their advance towards Van. The occupation caused no little stir in the world, though it meant very little indeed.

The Kurds pushed up to Sufian and Marand towards Julfa in Russian Transcaucasia. But before the end of January a small Russian force fell upon them, completely defeated them at Sufian, and re-entered Tabriz on 30th January. The whole of this affair, though it loomed large in people's minds, was the smallest of the by-play which accompanied the titanic struggles in the main areas of the war, and the great battles even in the Caucasus. It was distinguished by one thing, the great cruelty and barbarity of the Turkish irregulars, and it is pleasant to record that the Turkish conduct of the Caucasian campaign can be praised. It undoubtedly showed enlightened leading and bold handling of troops. Further, it exhibited in the Turks the possession of the amazing courage and determination which are frequently overlooked. It is questionable if an army belonging to any other civilised country would have undertaken such a campaign, ill-equipped and in winter, and if any other army, except the Russian, triumphing over so many handicaps, could have come so near decisive success.

## XV. AIRCRAFT IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE WAR.

SINCE the Russo-Japanese War aeroplanes had emerged from the merely experimental stage, and had become practical machines capable of making long continuous flights. Mr. Wilbur Wright had first attracted the attention of the world to the aeroplane by flying a mile in 1 minute 47 seconds in 1908 in France. From that time it was seen that the conquest of the air had been achieved. The aeroplane was, therefore, a military weapon of vast possibilities. The element of surprise upon which every general ultimately depends for a decisive stroke might be rendered impossible if aeroplanes were suitably used, and military experts gave the subject considerable attention. Observation from the air had, of course, been made in earlier wars. Captive balloons were a familiar expedient even in the Franco-Prussian War, and observation kites, capable of bearing a man, were used in South



Africa. But the aeroplane, with its power of rapid controlled and directed movement, might very easily put an end to captive balloons, and was certainly capable of reconnaissance efforts which had not previously been thought possible. Yet the Italian War in Tripoli, in 1911, did not show aeroplanes as the formidable machines they were expected to be, and the Turko-Balkan War was waged and conducted to a successful conclusion by no help of the aeroplanes which were present on both sides.

Still the European War Offices were not misled by the seeming failure of the aeroplane, and devoted themselves to the organisation of air services. The German army, not the first to take up the matter of an air service, were easily supreme in military air work at the beginning of the war. Zeppelins and other rigid airships had never found much favour with the army. They were a popular rather than an expert choice. The aeroplane was the machine chosen by the army, and with the peculiar logic of the German mind they developed the military use of the machine to a greater pitch of excellence than the French, who were first, as a nation, to achieve supremacy in flight by heavier than air machines. It is a special characteristic of the German mind to get the maximum use out of an instrument. When they applied criticism to the Bible they criticised purely and simply.

They developed the aeroplane in a similar intensive manner. They trained observers to observe and record rapidly and efficiently the distribution of forces, the nature and exact disposition of defensive works, the position of artillery, and so on. It was by training of this sort that the German air service became supreme during the first weeks of the war. The machines could not climb so fast or fly so rapidly as the British; but for the object for which they were intended they were easily and triumphantly first. They put the German commanders at the outset into touch with the movements of the Allied troops; they followed the retreating armies to the Marne, marking the positions of troops and guns, controlling the artillery, and so on.

The French air service, which at the opening of hostilities was thought to be the first in Europe, was actually hardly second. France had easily achieved supremacy by her civilian pilots, and since 1909 great attention had been paid to the equipment and organisation of the military air service. By the Picardy manœuvres of that year the War Office had accumulated a number of biplanes and monoplanes of various types, and their use in the manœuvres was to the military experts a complete justification of the foresight which had acquired them that the subsequent uselessness in the Italian War in Tripoli and the Balkan War could not obscure. The Italian War added one fact of great importance to our knowledge of the military uses of the aeroplane. It was shown that by taking photographs from the air the greatest detail could be obtained of trenches quite invisible from the earth.

After the Picardy manœuvres the number of aeroplanes was vastly increased; but they were of various kinds, and hence spare parts were hard to stock, and the organisation of the service had been condemned just before the outbreak of war by a committee of the French Senate. When Reims fell into the hands of the Germans fifty French aeroplanes were captured. This, and the fact that aeroplane factories were chiefly in the occupied territory, put the French air service, daring and skilful though it was, into a relative eclipse. It had never been so well organised as the British or the German services, and it was not so well trained for specially military purposes.

The British air service at first concentrated its attention upon aircraft other than aeroplanes, and it was not until 1911 that some attention began to be concentrated on the subject. In the April of 1912, however, when Lord Haldane was at the War Office, and Mr. Churchill at the Navy, a wise and comprehensive organisation was formed, which comprehended the needs both of the army and navy. The memorandum of the new scheme set forth the purpose of military aeroplanes as: (1) reconnaissance, (2) prevention of enemy's reconnaissance, (3) intercommunication, (4) observation of artillery fire, (5) inflicting damage upon the enemy. It is interesting to note that for the second purpose the Allied, and especially the British, airmen have been pre-eminent from the first. The scheme further provided for the equipment of eighty-four aeroplanes, arranged in seven squadrons, for the Expeditionary Force, and at least double the number of pilots and observers required. The establishment of a Central Flying School on Salisbury Plain, and of a Naval Flying School in the Isle of Sheppey, were other of the prudent provisions of the scheme. Major-General Sir David Henderson was appointed Director-General of Military Aeronautics.

The naval organisation in a year had seven Naval Air Stations along the coasts. It had ships specially fitted to launch, equip, and repair aeroplanes and seaplanes, and was in a thoroughly efficient condition. So efficient did the military arm show itself, that not only did Sir John French frequently mention it in his dispatches, but the following message was received at the turn of the Battle of the Marne from the Commander-in-Chief, General Joffre: "Please express most particularly to Marshal French my thanks for services rendered every day by the English Flying Corps. The precision, exactitude, and regularity of the news brought in by its members are evidence of their perfect organisation, and also of the perfect training of pilots and observers."

The remarks of "Eye Witness" are worthy of note in the same regard. Writing at the end of the Battle of the Marne, he says: "Quite one of the features of the campaign on our side has been the success attained by the Royal Flying Corps. In regard to the collection of information it is impossible either to award too much praise to our aviators for the way they have carried out their duties, or to even estimate the value of the intelligence collected, more especially during the recent advance. In due course, certain examples of what had been effected may be specified and the far-reaching nature of the results fully explained, but that time has not yet arrived. . . . To give a rough idea of the amount of work carried out it is sufficient to mention that, during a period of twenty days up to 10th September, a daily average of more than nine reconnaissance flights of over a hundred miles each has been maintained. The constant object of our aviators has been to effect the accurate location of the enemy's forces, and, incidentally—since the operations cover so large an area—of our own units. Nevertheless, the tactics adopted for dealing with hostile aircraft are to attack them instantly with one or more British machines. This has been so far successful, that in five cases German pilots or observers have been shot in the air, and their machines brought to the ground. As a consequence, the British Flying Corps has succeeded in establishing an individual ascendancy, which is as serviceable to us as it is damaging to the enemy."

Some of the particular exploits of the Flying Corps have already been mentioned. It was the British aeroplanes which verified the unwelcome news that General von Kluck was advancing against Mons with a greater force than had been expected,



and they detected Kluck's swerve to the south-east at the beginning of the Battle of the Marne. But their achievements became more accentuated when the new small scouting aeroplanes, which could fly at the rate of over one hundred miles an hour, made their appearance. The French invented an ingenious weapon of offence in the form of a steel arrow. The arrows were not more than a few inches long, pointed at one end and with a shaped end like feathers. They were carried in boxes, which the pilot could release by a simple motion of the hand, and the effect of these weapons dropped from a great height was considerable. The ordinary protection against the effects of shelling or bombs were of no avail against these arrows. Whether one stood up or lay flat the danger remained; indeed, lying flat on the ground but increased the surface offered to the arrow.

The work of the British naval air arm and of the German airships in connection with the German navy were two most important features of the war. The share of the naval airships and seaplanes in ensuring the safety of the British Expeditionary Force has already been described. But the unending patrol of the East Coast lends itself little to description, and yet it was of the first importance. At all hours of the day the airships remained in the air watching with unceasing care the enemy's coast. On their side the Germans had a much more powerful instrument in the Zeppelin, and these performed excellent service. From high altitudes the movements of the British ships could be seen for great distances and telegraphed to the German Admiralty. Their long radius of action and high speed made them of the greatest use for naval reconnaissance purposes.

Their record on land amply bore out the distrust of the German military authorities. Airships of all kinds, in fact, were brought down with ease by the French and Russian armies. And even on the sea they were at the mercy of one enemy—the weather. One of the odd complexities of modern life is that, with the command of the sea, Great Britain acquired a unique knowledge of air conditions from day to day. Any one who knows the type of weather across the Atlantic can foretell, with some real accuracy, the type of weather which is likely to prevail in Great Britain in the near future. The natural communication of such information to the Continental meteorological offices in time of peace ceased at the outbreak of war, and, as a result, Germany was kept in ignorance, not only of the weather in Great Britain, but of the approach of bad weather to her own coasts. As a consequence, the airship commanders often ran heavy risks and some fatalities occurred. On 17th February a Zeppelin was wrecked on Faroe Island, Denmark, and another German naval airship was wrecked off Jutland the same day.

No little courage, therefore, was needed by the Zeppelin commanders who left their base for a flight of any distance. The airship has nothing like the power of manœuvre possessed by an aeroplane. It offers a huge surface to the elements, and its density is inevitably so slight that it becomes almost a toy in heavy weather. Even a snowfall might destroy a Zeppelin—one did, in fact. Yet the Zeppelins ventured out on their bombing raids by a visit to the East Coast of England during the night of 19th January. They arrived over the English coast about 8.30 p.m. One made for Yarmouth, while another steered for Cromer. Beeston, Sherringham, King's Lynn, and Heacham were visited. One ship seemed to be making for Sandringham, as a bomb was dropped at Snettisham, and the King and Queen had only returned to town in the afternoon of that day without notice. At Yarmouth a man and a woman were killed, and a soldier was injured. At King's Lynn a woman and

a boy were killed, and three others were injured. But no damage of any military importance was done. It was a dark, wet, misty night, and this fact, while it saved the Zeppelins from having to encounter the British naval patrol, made useful reconnaissance impossible, and rendered the bombarding of a given spot a mere matter of chance. There was no particular courage required in thus venturing over a part of British territory without any special protection under the cover of darkness.

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But a British seaplane squadron on Christmas Day undertook and carried out an operation requiring the utmost courage and coolness. It was precisely in this quality that British airmen excelled. In the second raid on Düsseldorf, already mentioned, Lieutenant Marix, on 9th October, dropped to within a few feet of a Zeppelin shed and set it on fire. The deed, which undoubtedly produced something like panic in Düsseldorf, well merited the D.S.O. which was awarded.

But the operations of Christmas Day were of an extraordinary daring character. It was desired to supplement the observations of British submarines as to the movements of German warships in the Schillig Roads, which lie off Cuxhaven. The distance of the objective from England is about 380 miles. Seven naval seaplanes piloted by Flight Commanders Oliver, Hewlett, Ross, and Kilner, Flight Lieutenants Miley and Edmonds, and Flight Sub-Lieutenant Blackburn were carried to a point near Heligoland. The carrying ship was escorted by a light cruiser and destroyer force, together with submarines. The Germans were given a lesson in daring by the British ships, which thus steamed up to the very heart of German waters.

The seaplanes were lowered overboard at daybreak, and at once set about their business. They reconnoitred Heligoland and Cuxhaven. With the greatest coolness they sailed ahead and dived low to examine the conditions better, and to direct their bombs with greater accuracy. They were gone for some three hours, and in that time the seven seaplanes cast bombs upon the warships in the Schillig Roads and on the gasworks at Cuxhaven. What damage they did is not known. The German official wireless said no damage was done, but their account was substantially inaccurate about the whole affair. All the pilots except Flight Commander Hewlett returned safely. Three got back to their parent ship. Three others were picked up by Lieutenant-Commander Nasmyth on the submarine *ERR*. The submarine was lying with its periscope showing inshore, when the pilots Oliver, Miley, and Blackburn descended near by with their petrol supply exhausted. Nasmyth rose and went to their rescue, and in spite of the bomb-dropping of a Zeppelin which had been attracted to the spot, he succeeded in taking the men on board; and, sinking their machines, steamed off to safety. Flight Commander Francis Hewlett, who had been taught to fly by his mother, herself a skilful pilot, did not return with the other pilots. His machine was found some time later in a wrecked condition about eight miles from Heligoland, and it was at first thought he had been drowned. It was found later that he had been the victim of a chapter of accidents. He lost his way in a fog; his motor went wrong, and then he floated about the sea until he was picked up by a Dutch trawler and taken to Holland, whence he returned to England.

One of the most extraordinary incidents of the naval war for the first nine months occurred after the seaplanes had left the parent ships. The little sea force was seen from Heligoland, and at once two Zeppelins, three or four hostile seaplanes, and several submarines came out to the attack. An interesting contest then ensued.



One of the British seaplanes turned aside for a moment to attack a Zeppelin ; but as the airship at once began to climb the pilot sped off to the work assigned him. The British ships had to remain on the spot for some time or the pilots would have been abandoned. They do not seem to have found the Zeppelins very troublesome. The *Undaunted* and *Arethusa* fired a few rounds from their 6-inch guns, and put them to flight. The submarines were avoided by rapid manœuvring, and thus the outcome of this novel conflict was that the most modern cruisers came away unharmed after remaining for three hours off the enemy's coast. The German seaplanes dropped bombs, but without hitting any of the British ships. No surface vessel appeared from the German fleet to attack the small British force. A fact of much interest is that Lieutenant Erskine Childers, of the Naval Volunteer Reserve, was with the expedition. He is the author of "The Riddle of the Sands," which shows a profound study of this part of the German coast-line. Flight Commander Kilner and Flight Lieutenant Edmonds received the D.S.O., and Chief Petty Officers Bell and Budds the D.S.M., for specially distinguished conduct.

Christmas time did not pass in Britain without the Germans giving the English an earnest of their desires ; but the achievement lagged sadly behind their wishes. On Christmas Eve a German aeroplane threw bombs on Dover without causing any damage. A more formidable attempt to raid Dover and reach London in force was checked by an air patrol in France. But an air-raider did appear over Sheerness on Christmas Day, and he flew up the Thames to Erith, near Woolwich. This may have been its objective ; but as Erith is but fourteen miles from the heart of London, Woolwich was probably only an intermediate objective. At Sheerness the aeroplane was seen at 12.45 P.M., and at once three British aeroplanes rose to give chase. The aeroplane continued for twenty-four miles to Erith, although it was twice under a heavy fire from anti-aircraft guns, and it was thought that the observers were hit. At Erith the Germans were forced to retreat. Passing Southend they were again fired at, and four aeroplanes chased the invader until he was lost in the fog. The sequel to this air raid is the discovery later on, not far from the mouth of the Thames, of the wreckage of a German aeroplane and the decomposed body of a German airman.

The Germans seem to have found the British advanced base at Dunkirk an object of much interest, and several air raids were made upon it. One took place on the last day of the year 1914. During January repeated raids were made. It is clear that Dunkirk offered a true military objective. If it could be destroyed, or even its communications, no little confusion would result to the British lines, which looked to the port for their provisioning.

On 23rd January a squadron of twelve German aeroplanes attacked Dunkirk. At the moment selected for attack only Captain F. V. Holt was present for patrol duty. But he promptly attacked the leading German aeroplanes, firing at the pilots with such accuracy that they were beaten off. Captain Mills and Lieutenant Morgan had risen into the air when the body of the attacking force appeared. The three British airmen then attacked the ten German machines, most, if not all, of which carried two men, and succeeded in bringing one machine down. Captain Holt received the D.S.O. for his daring and skill. Only a week later there was another attack by aeroplanes. Little damage was caused by these repeated attacks.

Their raids upon the British communications and headquarters were more skilfully conceived and carried out. They bombarded the important junction at

Hazebrouck, which was for some time a British headquarters. In December they bombarded several other junctions in the neighbourhood. But they were not of such importance as several aerial attacks by the British. The object which all these operations had in view was to cause difficulty in the transfer of troops and munitions from one part of the front to another.

By far the most important attempt, during the first nine months of the war, to isolate a particular section of the line was that of the British airmen carried out during the actual fighting at Neuve Chapelle. The junctions of Don and Menin were bombarded, and in this way reinforcements were kept out of the area of fighting for some time. The airmen's share was not confined to this. The German trenches were most carefully observed and photographed so that the British artillery could get the exact range well before the beginning of the action. Then another function fell to their care. A vast concentration of guns was being made behind one small section of the British line. The whole strength of such a manœuvre lay in the fact that it would find the enemy at a marked disadvantage. To achieve this the element of surprise must be preserved; and the only way to keep the Germans from knowing was to beat off at once any German aeroplane which appeared in the neighbourhood. In itself the operation was striking enough; but its greatest significance was the vista of possibilities it opened up. It proved with sufficient thoroughness that a day would come when thousands of the fastest aircraft would suddenly cut off a small force from all help, and there it would be left to hold up against bombardment from guns of all sorts, howitzers and machine guns, bombs from the air, until the force capitulated, or, driven mad by terror, was annihilated.

A beginning of the massed attack from the air has already been described. The German attack upon Dunkirk with twelve aeroplanes was, however, a comparatively minor affair as compared with two attacks launched by British squadrons. On 12th February thirty-four naval aeroplanes and seaplanes set out, under the command of Wing Commander Samson, for a raid upon Zeebrugge, which was being used as a submarine workshop and base. A raid had been made three weeks earlier on Zeebrugge by Squadron Commander Davies and Flight Lieutenant Peirse, when they were successful in destroying one of the two submarines they found in the harbour. Wing Commander Samson's raid was a much more enterprising and formidable operation. Another submarine was destroyed, several batteries near the fort were put out of action, a Zeppelin was destroyed in its shed, coast railway communications were interrupted in several places, the electricity works at Zeebrugge were temporarily damaged, and Ostend railway station was injured. A formidable list of damages for one raid! Four days later forty aeroplanes and seaplanes made a raid along the coast, while the French airmen bombarded the German aeroplane centre at Ghisteltes. Mine-sweepers were damaged, the Zeebrugge mole was almost destroyed, and the Bruges Canal locks were seriously damaged. Each of these large raids, a presage of tactics of the wars of to-morrow, was carried out without loss to the British. Two airmen were carried out to sea on the second occasion, one of them being a famous air pilot of peace times, Grahame White. But no loss had been incurred, though on the occasion of the attack by two airmen one of them was wounded in the thigh.

What was probably the most brilliant air exploit of the first six months of the war had taken place some time earlier, and the heroes were again members of the Royal Naval Air Service. Based at Belfort, an attempt was made to damage one of



the great centres of Zeppelin manufacture, Friedrichshafen. The town lies on Lake Constance, some little distance from the Austro-Hungarian frontier. To reach it from Belfort the airmen had to skirt the Vosges and cross the Black Forest range, and the distance was about 120 miles each way. It was reported that new and improved Zeppelins were building at Friedrichshafen for the bombardment of London. The report, no doubt, lent additional interest to the expedition. On 21st November Squadron Commander E. F. Briggs, Flight Commander Babington, and Lieutenant Lippe left Belfort and steered for the Rhine. They followed the broad course of the river to its emptying into Lake Constance, and then near Schaffhausen, close to their objective, the leader lost his companions in the heavy mist above the lake. He continued to the Zeppelin works, assailed by guns of all sorts, and discharged his bombs only to find his petrol tank had been damaged, and he was compelled to come down. Lieutenant Lippe, who, with the third airman, returned quite safely, dropped his bombs on the gas factory and set it on fire. Between them the airmen destroyed one of the latest airships, damaged the sheds and works, besides setting fire to the gas tank. Squadron Commander Briggs was roughly handled when he came down. Indeed, here, as at Düsseldorf, something approaching panic was caused by the attacks of the hostile airmen. A German officer, however, rescued the brave airman, and took him to hospital.

The other achievements of the naval and military air services up to the beginning of March merge into what was, however thrilling and romantic, everyday occurrences. Daily reconnaissances were carried out. The men would start at various hours of the day, and at night would congregate by some obscure movement of sympathy round the local centre to see the last man home. Sometimes the officer in command would grow anxious as the darkness deepened. Flares might be ordered out to mark the alighting place. On one occasion an airman was lost altogether for some time, at the end of which he flew to his old rendezvous on a new machine from England. He had been compelled to descend in the German lines; but had escaped, made his way through the lines again at night, and so got back to England.

The German airships continued to meet with misfortune. They were brought down in Russia and Alsace, and blown down even in Cologne. The two raids on Essex towns and Calais did not offset these other misadventures. But the airmen continued to acquire power. Experiments were made with heavier and more powerful machines, which would be able to carry heavier loads. The favourite Russian type from the beginning was a huge affair, and its achievements on the East Prussian front were certainly formidable. Early in 1915 Baron Koulbars visited Sir John French's headquarters to examine into the action of the air service. Wireless telegraphy communication was soon highly developed in aeroplane work, and rendered the machines to a great extent independent of fogs and mists. But numbers was the real controlling factor of aerial work, and its development was arrested until that crucial factor was dealt with.

## XVI. TURKEY'S INVASION OF EGYPT.

THE attempted invasion of Egypt and seizure of the Suez Canal won no renown for the Turks. Indeed, it seems probable that, but for the able opposition to the Allies

in the Dardanelles, the Turks would have emerged from the war with reputations more sadly depreciated than they entered it. There can be little doubt that the British, and probably the French, deduced from the Turko-Balkan War that the Turks were contemptible antagonists, and certainly they seemed to re-enforce this inference by their actual behaviour. On the outbreak of war between Turkey and the Allies Great Britain at once annexed Cyprus. About six weeks later (17th December) Egypt was proclaimed a Turkish Protectorate, and Prince Hussein Kamel Pasha was appointed Khedive with the title Sultan of Egypt. So far as politics went the division between Turkey and Egypt was now and henceforth complete. Yet it is quite plain that Turkey did not mean to give up her suzerainty over Egypt without a struggle, and she was stimulated to attack that country the more, since any success which gave her even so much territory as the western shores of the Suez Canal would have a vital effect upon the whole war.

Egypt was a most important British base and training centre. Thither came troops from Australia, New Zealand, India, and Great Britain. When the Dardanelles' operations were undertaken Egypt became almost essential to the success of the undertaking. Troops could be dispatched thence to Mesopotamia or to France or to the Dardanelles. The troops which arrived at the centre were at once drilled and habituated to the conditions obtaining in the Eastern war. At the same time the Suez Canal was adequately defended. The Suez Canal was indeed one of the most essential nerve centres of the British Empire. If it were taken the main communication with the East was gone. Australia, New Zealand, India, and the Persian Gulf were all cut off from Great Britain, and could not send help or succour the mother country with half the ease and security possible while the Canal remained British.

The attractions of Egypt to the Turkish mind are then obvious. If their co-operation was to be of any value to the Germanic allies Egypt must be taken, or at least the Suez Canal must be closed. The closing of the Dardanelles, by which an automatic and complete blockade of Russia was enforced, was not sufficient. In a way this campaign represented one of the most romantic of all campaigns. An army marching upon Egypt would have to be based upon one of those biblical towns, whose names are probably better known throughout the world than any other except quite local names. The troops would be recruited in Palestine and Arabia in old and reverent-sounding places, in Damascus and Bagdad, around which tradition and legend have woven such a web of thrilling interest. The army of invasion would have to march across the Sinai Peninsula, reminiscent of the earliest of biblical stories. It would march under much the same conditions as those first peoples in the Bible, pausing at wells on the desert road, weary and parched. All this, in fact, and a much broader and longer vista of old and familiar Eastern conditions, which the Bible has engraved on the hearts and minds of the peoples of Western Christendom, were the actual framework of the invasion. The *Jehad*, the Holy War, was proclaimed, an event which some of the more enthusiastic Turks imagined would rally untold millions to the Turkish banners. But it was not to be. Recruits were drawn from many parts of Syria, and amounted to considerable numbers altogether; but the loyalty of the Indian Muslims cut off the vast bulk of the recruits which Turkey had expected.

The way of advance against Egypt was the Sinai Peninsula, simply because Great Britain held the command of the sea. If she had not done so the country could have



been invaded from Asia Minor or Arabia ; and it was to ensure the inviolability of the Egyptian coasts that a large force of cruisers and destroyers was accumulated in the Eastern Mediterranean about the time of the declaration of war against Turkey. For a considerable distance the Red Sea is the only barrier between Arabia and Egypt ; and if Turkey had had sufficient naval force to have seized command of the sea for only a few hours, she might have seized Egypt, since a successful invasion across the Red Sea might have caused sufficient confusion to enable Turkey to send reinforcements via the Sinai Peninsula. On the opposite side of the Sinai Peninsula to that which is washed by the Red Sea and the waters of the Suez Canal is the Gulf of Akaba, and this also had to be guarded. If the head of the gulf had been held by the navy the Turko-Egyptian frontiers would have had a considerable reinforcement to their southern flank. Similarly, the northern flank, near Rafa at the extreme south of the Palestine seaboard could be held from the sea.

It seems certain that the first British plan had contemplated holding that frontier, and the presence and operations of the cruiser *Minerva*, with the destroyers *Savage* and *Scourge*, were no doubt parts of this plan. But second thoughts convinced the Egyptian army of the folly of imposing such a strain on their transport as the Sinai Peninsula behind them implied ; and it was decided to allow the Turks to suffer this disadvantage, and to stand only at the Suez Canal. The whole of the coast of Asia Minor and Palestine was open to prying visits of British and French cruisers, which did as much damage as they could, bombarding camps, destroying petrol and war stores, and observing, by means of hydroplanes, the movements of troops. At one point operations of this sort might have been of critical importance. At the angle where the southern shores of Asia Minor turn south to the Palestine coast, the railway which connects Syria with Turkey in Europe runs near the sea. There is no complete line either near the coast or inland. The railway ends at the western foot of the Taurus range of mountains, some distance from the sea, and Radju, where it resumes on the eastern side, is some thirty miles to the south. The intervening space is a bad mountain road, liable to become almost impassable in winter or spring, and at any rate for heavy transport. The other branch line approaches the coast very closely from Payas to the port of Alexandretta. From Alexandretta to the east there is a good road which runs to Aleppo. For military transport there is no question as to which road should be used ; but it was not until the main army for the invasion of Egypt had passed this critical section of the road to the south that the naval authorities visited Alexandretta, and for the future made it certain that only spasmodic and occasional reinforcements of troops or material passed through.

Even in September the German officers in Turkey had taken charge of extensive preparations in Southern Syria for the attack upon Egypt, and before the declaration of war a force of Bedouins, about 2,000 strong, had invaded the Sinai Peninsula and seized the wells of Magdala. This peninsula, which formed the eastern bastion of Egypt, was in itself a very considerable defence against invasion. The lines of advance across it are conditioned by the wells. The best line is that which runs along the northern coast from Rafa at the eastern frontier, to Kantara on the canal. The disadvantage attaching to such a route is that, since it runs near the coast for some distance, it is commanded from the sea. It is a route of soft drift sand. This is the shortest of the trans-Sinai routes. Farther south is the Pilgrim's road from Akaba to Suez ; it is a good road so far as surface is concerned, and it could take

heavy artillery or motor traffic ; but it lacks water. In between was the plateau region, traversed by the roads to Ismailia and to Fort Nakhil. The surface of these roads was good, and the water supply was reported to be better than was expected, and the Ismailia route became the line of the main Turkish advance. There was at first some playing with the idea of constructing railways to the Sinai Peninsula ; but with the labour at Turkish disposal and Turkish methods of organisation the attempts were abandoned, when it was found that the line could not be ready for the early spring when the crossing of the desert would be practicable.

The Turkish force for the invasion of Egypt was put under the command of Djemal Pasha, a bold and forceful character, who possessed little judgment and less discretion. The operations against Egypt were to him a sort of holy project. He hated the English, and his feelings would no doubt have made his expedition even more ridiculous if he had not had a competent Chief of Staff in Colonel Kress von Kressenstein, a Bavarian. The 4th Army, as his command was called, had as its backbone the 4th Corps, composed of well-drilled troops. All told he had about 60,000 or 70,000 troops at his disposal in Syria at the beginning of the year. A little over half were first-line troops, and some 10,000 were Bedouin irregulars. He had a certain amount of artillery and large stores ; but he could not use the whole of his force against Egypt since some must be left to guard his lines from the sea, and some to settle the disaffected Arab population. The German and Austrian attempts to stir up racial and religious feeling in the Turkish cause was managed with characteristic lack of insight into the psychology of the people with whom they were dealing.

On the other hand, if the Turkish command was small, or all that was available was small, and if the troops were faced with an expedition of great hardship before they came into touch with the enemy, conditions in Egypt were excellent. During the month after the declaration of war against Turkey about 40,000 Australians and New Zealanders, the East Lancashire Territorial Division, some Yeomanry, and a strong and efficient force from India were in training in Egypt. The Australians and New Zealanders were magnificent material, as they showed when the Dardanelles operations began ; but at first they took to discipline hardly. On various stretches of country about Alexandria and Cairo, these and the Territorial units were put into further training ; and, although in the end, few of the Colonial troops saw the fighting upon the Suez Canal, the result of the training was shown much more vividly upon the Gallipoli beaches. Side by side with this training work there went on the work of fortifying the Canal defences. Towards the east the bridge-heads were fortified in the most modern way, and the western bank was skilfully entrenched. About El Kantara the country was flooded and the area of approach was thus considerably limited. In command of the forces was General Sir John Maxwell, who was virtually in supreme command of Egypt during these months. His handling of the situation was chiefly marked by caution.

In the beginning of the new year more immediate preparations began to be made. El Arish had been turned into an advanced base. Fort Nakhil had been occupied, and it had been decided to make the main advance from El Audja, across the plateau, against Ismailia. Beersheba was the Turkish base for this advance, and stores were carried forward with camels to El Audja. The Turkish troops were also sent to Fort Nakhil, and thence across the peninsula by the southern route. The force for the advance upon Ismailia comprised nearly 30,000 troops, with



some cavalry, two 6-inch howitzers, and a pontoon company. The northern column proceeding via El Arish to El Kantara, comprised infantry, artillery, and cavalry, with some irregulars, amounting to about 6,000 men, under the command of an ex-brigand. The southern force was, perhaps, about half as large. The three columns made good marching across the peninsula, the men frequently covering twenty miles, and the camels ninety miles per day. The camel transport worked well. There was little dearth of food or water. The howitzers were a difficulty in the softer ground; but the pontoons were easily drawn.

Between the 10th and 18th January the bulk of the army passed through Beersheba. The enemy was near the canal all along the front, and on 26th January the covering troops from El Kantara had a brush with the enemy and fell back. A



The Approaches to the Canal.

number of British warships now entered the canal. Their function was to protect Lake Timash and the Great Bitter Lake, as well as to increase the stream of heavy shell all along the canal. After the first brush with the enemy on the 26th, skirmishes were of daily occurrence. On 27th January New Zealand troops repulsed an attack upon El Kubri by the southern column. Early on the following morning the Sikhs repulsed a similar rush upon El Kantara. Wherever a larger body of the enemy showed up, it was the immediate object of shells from the ships, and the aeroplanes made great practice among the congested masses of men, camels, and horses.

The Turks seem to have ignored these minor checks and, full of confidence, prepared for the main attack. It does not seem to have occurred to them that the canal was

railed along its entire length on the western side, and the fact that one reconnaissance showed certain sections of the line undefended, seems to have suggested to them that the whole was undefended. Further, there was the religious obsession. The Indian Muslims were about to desert in a body, and tributary chiefs were going to attack the British in the rear. The main point of attack was selected with skill. It was to be a point between Serapeum and Tussum. At this point, if the Turks had succeeded in crossing, they would have been within an extremely short distance of the junction of the railways to the east and south. The Cairo railway joins here, and the whole canal north and south is supplied by the railway commanded by the same junction. A demonstration in force was to be made at Ismailia, while the main attack was pressed to prevent any sudden reinforcement.

Another attack was to be made at El Kantara, with a subsidiary movement, to distract attention at El Ferdan. There was also to be a secondary operation against Kubri. The action was forced on, though a fair proportion of the main force was not yet in line. Djemal Pasha seems to have been perfectly confident of crossing the canal below Ismailia at his main point of attack. He seems to have felt that by careful precaution, by imposing the utmost silence upon all his men, he would be enabled to take the defending force by surprise. Djemal Pasha took up his headquarters at Katayib el Kheil, on rising ground in the rear of the area of his main thrust; and the troops were moved to the attack. A small force of Indians sent out from Ismailia to reconnoitre on 2nd February came into contact with the enemy about four miles east of the British trenches. After a desultory engagement a sandstorm arose, and the Turks dug themselves in not far from Ismailia Ferry.

During the night the main attack opened. Below Tussum bridgehead the sides of the canal shore steeply to the water edges, leaving only a narrow flat shelf of beach. The hilly banks are broken here and there on both sides, and it was through these breaches on the eastern bank the Turks dragged their pontoons and rafts. There were about twenty pontoons and about half as many rafts formed from kerosene tins in frames. The night was dark, and from the nature of the ground no sign of life could be seen on the western side. The password "Sacred Standard" was given out, and white bands were fixed upon the upper part of the men's arms.

Some of the Turks were noisy, but no sound came from the western side save the ordinary chance sounds of night. Loud officers' orders and loud exhortations by religious leaders were hardly the best way of carrying out the commander's orders. Just as the Turks came forward to take the offensive, mountain guns and maxims opened fire from the British lines. The Turks who had not left the spaces on the eastern banks were mown down, and those on the beach suffered heavily. Some of the pontoons were sunk, and one or two attempts to land were repelled by Indian troops, who charged under a hot fire from the farther bank upon the few men who were clambering ashore. The tiny torpedo boat O43 won great fame by its extraordinary courage. Dashing down under heavy fire, it sank a number of the boats lying on the eastern bank, and caused many deaths by its guns. One of the pontoons sank only as the men were near enough to get ashore, and the Turks, who were not seen at once, managed to snipe a good many men and a number of artillery horses before they were compelled to surrender in the morning by Indian cavalry. As day broke heavier Turkish forces took up the attack. One column marched upon the fortified bridgehead at Tussum, covered by their artillery, and another section attacked Serapeum. They were shelled by warships from Timash and on



the canal, as well as by the batteries on the western side. After a heavy fire from all arms the Turks on this front were driven to retire by a counter-attack of the British from a ridge commanding their positions.

Meanwhile, the men-of-war had been under fire during the day. The orders of Djemal Pasha seem to have been bold and skilful. He sent his howitzers to deal with the ships on Lake Timash. If possible, they were to sink a ship to block up the southern exit from the lake, and so cover the bridging operation below. The same tactics were to be adopted towards ships upon the Great Bitter Lake, though how the Turkish commander could have reasonably expected two 6-inch howitzers to cope with the mass of fire from moving targets it is difficult to know. He had the consolation of knowing that he did some harm, if nothing like as much as he had proposed. The transport *Hardinge*, an unprotected ship, had her funnel wrecked and received a shell which burst inboard, killing two and wounding seven of the crew. Temporary Lieutenant Carew, of the Royal Naval Reserve, was acting as pilot, when one of his legs and one of his arms were shattered by a shell; but he continued to act as pilot, and won, by his coolness and courage, a well-deserved Distinguished Service Cross. The *Swiftsure*, which was in action on Lake Timash and below, seems to have suffered nothing worse than one death from sniping.

While the last stages of the attack on the main point, between Tussum and Serapeum, were being decided, the advance on other sections of the canal line was only beginning. The attack upon Ismailia Ferry, and farther north upon Kantara, opened long after daybreak. At the ferry the advance was checked at about one thousand yards from the British lines by the well-directed fire from the Indian troops in that section. At Kantara the British positions were very strong, and many of the Turks sank waist-deep in the flooded area. The advance was brought to a standstill at the barbed wire. Farther south the ubiquitous *Swiftsure* came to the aid of the British, and like the *Clio* at El Ferdan, caused considerable damage. At Suez the attack was very half-hearted. By the afternoon of 3rd February it was clear the attack upon the canal had failed. There was still a small body at least left between Tussum and Serapeum, which was not cleared out until the morning of the 4th. The British losses in the whole engagement were about 115 killed and wounded. The Turks lost over 900 certainly dead, 650 were taken prisoner, and between 1,500 and 2,000 were wounded.

No effort was made to destroy the Turks on their retreat. It is possible that the commanders thought the operations so far were merely the prelude to an attack in force. This would seem the more feasible since it was known that a large proportion of the Turkish force had not been in action. On the other hand, aerial reconnaissance must have shown that no attack was still pending, and that the Turks were in full retreat. It may be that this was not discovered until it was felt that the psychological moment for an attack to disperse the retreating enemy had passed. Certainly, unless the retreat was verified by reconnaissance, it must have seemed very difficult to believe that this was the whole of the invasion of Egypt. Whatever be the reason, in the event it was determined not to pursue the Turks, and the bulk of the army made its way back to Palestine. It is quite possible it was as we have suggested, that the delay in discovering their intentions lost to the British the advantages of a sudden harrying of the retreat. If this be so the very ineptitude of the attempted invasion saved the Turks from annihilation. For the British forces greatly outnumbered the enemy and were eager to finish off the affair. The final

reason, no doubt, was that desert warfare imposes heavy burdens even on the most skilled troops, and the bulk of those under Sir John Maxwell's command were not seasoned troops. He had withdrawn from the Turko-Egyptian frontier to the canal because of the difficulties and dangers of transport. To have embarked on an advance against the retreating enemy would have been to risk an improvised transport when an organised system had been weighed and discarded. The Turkish troops had, as was now demonstrated, conquered the problem of the desert, and the Turks are good fighters. Possibly Sir John Maxwell was well advised to rest on his laurels. He had succeeded in making the Turkish invasion take on the colour of the burlesque, and that was a sufficient victory.

One operation of the Turkish forces, small in itself, has a greater romantic interest owing to its attendant circumstances. The Egyptian health station at Tor, on the western side and near the apex of the Sinai Peninsula, seemed a tempting bait to the Turks at Fort Nakhl. It was said to be undefended; but when the small Turkish force arrived they found 200 Egyptian troops in possession. The small body of men had marched through the mountainous southern part of the peninsula, and demanded food at the Monastery on Mount Sinai. They pretended to be the part of a larger force, but on arriving at Tor they found it wiser to send for reinforcements before approaching the town. Their numbers were increased, until the forces were about equal; but secretly a small force of Gurkhas was sent down the Red Sea from Suez. It landed in the rear of the Turks and destroyed them, taking a hundred prisoners.

There was no further movement against the canal until 22nd March, when about one thousand men took part in a raid towards El Kubri. Their advance guard was encountered by a handful of Indian troops, under Havildar Sutha Singh, who, outnumbered by forty to one, fought the Turks with the utmost skill. The next day General Younghusband took up the action; but could do nothing more than harass the retreat of the raiders. A month later another raid was found to be approaching El Ferdan, and cavalry were sent to drive it off, an operation they accomplished most successfully. In June another raid was made, but it fared no better; and by that time events had changed so much to the north that a vast bulk of the forces were withdrawn from Syria. The opening of land operations against the Dardanelles was, in effect, the best method of preserving Egypt immune. Forces still remained at Fort Nakhl and El Arish, but their movements were carefully observed by aerial reconnaissance, and their operations were brought to nothing at the outset.

In spite of the extraordinary conditions of British rule in Egypt, there was little excitement at the outbreak of war with Turkey. The Grand Senussi acted, at first, as a prudent statesman, and kept his Bedouin people west of the Delta in hand. In Cairo and Alexandria there was some exhibition of anti-national feeling, but probably not more than at other times. A man named Khalil, a criminal in ordinary times, attempted to shoot the Sultan on 8th April, but he was seized, tried, and executed on 24th April. The attempt roused the people in favour of the Sultan, as did another attempt later in the year.

Djemeal Pasha's reconnaissance seems to have had no other effect than to lose a good number of men. The invasion never seemed to promise success, and only the traditional romance of the Turks pretended it was so.



## XVII. THE COAST RAIDS AND RETRIBUTION: THE DOGGER BANK.

THE war, which put to the test and established the efficiency of the air force, also established the real efficiency of the submarine. Only two months before the war broke out Admiral Sir Percy Scott declared it as his belief that the day of the great battleship and heavy gun was over, and that the submarine would supersede both. There is little to be gained now by recapitulating the storm of controversy aroused by the challenge of the officer who had spent so much time in perfecting gunnery. Within a few months of the war the sea campaign had proved the contentions to be wide of the mark. The exploit of the *Birmingham* had shown that in certain conditions the submarine was at a marked disadvantage in a conflict with a cruiser which had speed, and could be handled smartly. On the other hand, the sinking of the *Hogue*, *Cressy*, and *Aboukir* proved beyond a doubt that in the hands of a competent officer, the submarine could be a very deadly weapon. The instructions which were issued with regard to standing by a disabled companion were coloured by the tragic fate of the three cruisers, and they were a tacit admission of the vulnerability of the large ship.

It is not quite exact to represent the readjustment in these terms without some qualification. It is perfectly correct to state that "keep moving" and moving in an irregular course was at this time the only safeguard against attack by submarine. But even the most powerful warship had to use its special qualities to prevent itself being put *hors de combat* by a weaker type. If a Dreadnought, with its possibility of hitting with fatal effect at 18,000 yards' distance, were to allow a light cruiser with half the range to approach to its own selected point, it would already have sacrificed most of the advantages for which it was designed. Similarly, a submarine could not safely show itself on the surface of the water near to a fast-moving destroyer or cruiser. Each type, then, may be considered reasonably safe in its own *milieu*, and each has its special qualities, which cannot be sacrificed. The critics who see the doom of every type except the submarine have not considered the fact that, at present, no means has been found of making it possible for one submarine to attack another; and hence, if submarines alone existed, each side would be doomed to a merely defensive warfare. If once it be granted as desirable, and even imperative, that one side should attack and defeat the other, then immediately over-water craft with guns become necessary, and the logical line of development is the Dreadnought and battle-cruiser types. According to present conditions, it seems clear that the decision still rests with these types, provided they are adequately guarded by destroyers; for the destroyer has shown itself in the war against submarines an adequate master.

Still, even in the first phase of the war, the submarine justified its existence and showed itself to be a powerful weapon of offence. The war was not more than a few hours old before it had shown that an extraordinary readjustment must be made in sea warfare, for within a few hours British submarines were prying about in the Bight of Heligoland and in the north German harbour mouths. Clearly, such an achievement reacted upon British as well as German naval tactics. The Grand Fleets could not keep the seas in the teeth of such a threat, and both the British and German fleets had to lie in hidden anchorages, ready for all emergencies, yet protected against under-water craft by booms, nets, and lighters. This was not of

paramount moment to the German fleet. In spite of much boasting, which strikes the student as peculiarly regrettable in a nation which, without doubt, is competent, the German Staff had no delusions about their chances of success against the Allied fleets even when many cruisers were perforce withdrawn from home waters to hunt down the few German cruisers still at sea. The German Grand Fleet, therefore, felt it no restriction to be compelled to lie low, and to feel each joint in their armour being tested daily by British submarines. The Germans have a special gift for organisation, and can deal with crowded detail as few nations can. While they neglected no precaution they were safe, and they could with little trouble see that all precautions were taken. It is true that, in the meantime, German commerce was being swept from the seas. The Germans had a profound respect for the British fleet; and, in the first months of the war, when a surprise attack might have been successful no one had the daring to suggest it.

It was far otherwise with the British navy. Unless it could either keep the sea, or keep effective watch upon the sea, the fruit of its naval preponderance was gone. It could neither destroy German and Austrian commerce nor defend its own. It could not prevent the German fleet issuing forth with a sufficient number of transports to invade England. Upon all these problems the emergence of the submarine bore with great weight. In the days of old a blockade was a simple affair. The warships lay off the blockaded coasts, or made a stately course up and down like an English policeman. No ship could issue and none penetrate that cordon, granted a sufficiency of numbers in the blockading fleet. But the advent of the submarine as an efficient weapon forced the blockading squadron to keep away from the coast. It did even more. Before the submarine it would have mattered little whether the blockade was effected well inshore or some hours' sail from shore. With such a fleet as the British an efficient watch could easily be kept by stationing a line of cruisers or battleships at distances from each other. The submarines had sealed the battleships in their bases, and they compelled the cruisers to keep moving about. They themselves, as we have seen, could go where they would within the radius of their fuel, and this would carry them to any part of the British coast and back. The net result was that the blockade could not be kept strictly at all, and that it was always *possible* for a few fast cruisers to steal out from the German harbours, when the submarine scouts had informed them the way was clear, and to reach the English coast.

The precise results expected from a raid on the English coast are not at first very clear. An invasion of England, of course, might seem to offer certain advantages; though how it could take place with the British fleet still in being, and how it could have any success with the country filled with troops, is hard to say. It is known that a German army of between two and three corps—that is, between 80,000 and 120,000—was at one time actually embarked in transports for such an invasion. But the German fleet came to know that the British were prepared, and the transports put back. What such an army could have expected to do, even in the earliest days of the war, when the British Expeditionary Force had left, and recruits were still merely recruits, it is not for us to say. It could never have achieved anything but the most momentary of successes; and it would never have seen Germany again until the end of the war.

It might perhaps have produced panic, though this in the light of subsequent events is not very probable. It might, however, have raised an outcry against the



dispositions of the navy, forcing the Admiralty to divide its forces, or to make them keep the sea. These effects, purely visionary as they are, must, nevertheless, have been what the several raids on the British coast were expected to produce. If the navy were split up the German fleet would have the chance it sought of attacking it in sections and defeating it. Then an invasion in force could be undertaken. The only other reasons for the raids—blind hate and desire to hurt England—can hardly have been the sole motive, if they were a motive at all. In the state of feeling against England prevalent in Germany, the German Staff could offer the people no better and more acceptable proof of their invincibility—and this was the prop upon which the German economical system rested—than the fact of a raid on British territory, in spite of the proudly vaunted British fleet, the destruction of "forts," or at least fortified or defended towns. To civilians, with no precise knowledge of the towns involved, of the conditions of naval blockade, or of the precise bearing of the provisions of the Hague Convention, such raids were glorious exploits, demonstrating the daring and efficiency of the expensive naval creation of modern years.

The first of these raids took place, as we have seen, on 3rd November. It was the morrow of the defeat of Admiral Cradock's squadron off Coronel; and it was thought that the country, already in a state approaching panic from this disastrous battle, would be driven frantic by an attack on the coast. There was also to be a last great attack upon Ypres, and it was desired that no more troops should be sent to reinforce those holding the city. There was further the desire to draw a British squadron into a running-away fight, and so meet them at little numerical disadvantage and draw them on to a new minefield. The *Yorck* alone fell victim to the minefield, and no panic followed. But the German strategy was sound; and inactivity must lower the *moral* of the navy. A second raid was, therefore, attempted when public opinion for a far different reason seemed to call for it. On 8th December Admiral Sturdee made an end of the German squadron which had sunk the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*; and a week later, when the news was to some extent assimilated by the German populace, the German Admiralty felt it necessary to do something. The action they chose was one which seems very significant, for they sent out three of their most powerful battle cruisers, including the most recent and most powerful, the *Derfflinger*, to repeat the tactics of the Yarmouth raid. It is a striking commentary upon the state of feeling in the German Staff that they were prepared to risk a most important part of their navy. Its loss could not be made good for at least a year, and during that time the German Admirals would have had practically no chance at all against a British fleet, even if the numbers should be the same. For the battle cruisers are necessary to counteract the manœuvres of similar ships in a hostile squadron. They are, as it were, the cavalry which threaten to envelop the enemy Dreadnoughts, with their much lower mobility. Only battle cruisers can check such a manœuvre. They alone have both the speed and the weight. That the Germans were so moved as to invite a risk of losing such important vessels is at once a gauge of the effect of the Falklands victory, and an indication of an impressionableness which is a sufficient reason for these raids. They judged by the effect upon themselves, ignoring the fact that the British civilian, like the British soldier, is a difficult person to impress or depress.

On 15th December the German ships left their base and steamed at their highest speed for a part of the north-eastern coast of England which had not been mined. It is clear that all the coast cannot be mined, as commerce would then cease, and the

navy would be greatly hampered. The Germans well knew where mines might be expected and where they were not to be feared, and it was their plan to attack where no risk lay. The places chosen for bombardment were the Hartlepoons, Scarborough, and Whitby. According to the Hague Convention, either Scarborough and Whitby were immune from attack or the provisions have no meaning. For it is clear that every place of their size within an area that is open to invasion will have signalling stations and troops somewhere near it. The Hartlepoons, with their land batteries, were open to attack; and naturally did not complain of it when it came. But Scarborough, which had not even troops within its area, how can that be said to be open to attack?

A British officer, in conversation with the writer, held that the Germans were technically right, as the places were "defended." When it was pointed out that there was no force within some two miles of Scarborough, he pointed out that the force was obviously for the defence of the place, and that it was pedantic to insist the force should be within municipal boundaries. But to take such a line is to hold that almost any coast town in a country at war is justly liable to bombardment, to explain the provisions of the Hague Convention as purely illusory and meaningless. And at the best, it can only be said that the German Staff interpreted every Convention in the direction of the greatest barbarity. German terrorism, in fine, is an ineradicable temper or temperament, which can be depended upon to find an outlet even through the most stringent rules, just as a type of capitalist actually lives by swindling while always keeping within the letter of the law. The provisions of the Hague Convention, which were designed to protect civilians, were undoubtedly outraged in spirit; and it is more than doubtful if there can be even any literal defence for the attack on such towns as Scarborough and Whitby.

The German fleet consisted of the *Derfflinger*, the *Moltke* and the *Seydlitz*, the *Von der Tann*, *Blücher*, and two light cruisers. On approaching the British coast they spread out. Scarborough was the first place to be attacked. The *Moltke* and an armoured cruiser steamed round the South Bay a few minutes after eight o'clock in the morning. They were well in to the shore, standing much nearer than British warships are wont to do. The cruisers steamed south round the Bay and turned north afterwards. As they went they fired continuously, the *Moltke's* great 11-inch guns doing tremendous damage. The bombardment lasted between twenty minutes and half an hour. Between 200 and 300 shells were fired. The morning was not very clear; but standing so close inshore the ships could see their targets clearly, and the seamanship, if not the gunnery, was well carried out. The wireless station and the gasworks escaped damage, but the old barracks on Castle Hill, unoccupied at the time, was destroyed. The Castle walls were shattered in several places. Four churches were damaged. Shells also tore up the promenade and several of the main streets, fractured cables, destroyed houses, and damaged hotels. The bombardment caused much excitement. A postman was handing a letter to a servant girl; both were killed. Another servant was killed as she knelt to light a fire. In all eighteen were killed, eight being women and four children; and one hundred were wounded. From Scarborough the ships seem to have steamed to Whitby, though it is said two battle cruisers bombarded the second town. The bombardment lasted fourteen to fifteen minutes, during which thirty shells were fired. The firing began about 9.15 A.M., and the chief objective was the signal station, which stands near the Abbey on the East Cliff, a point of some elevation.



Many shells were too high and fell into the harbour. Only two men were killed and two boys wounded.

The bombardment of the Hartlepoons was opened about 8.15 A.M., and was carried out by, probably, the battle cruisers *Derfflinger* and *Seydlitz*, with the armoured cruiser *Blücher*. The ships are said to have steamed well in under the British flag, and even at first to have fired out to sea. The ruse, a quite legitimate one, would not have succeeded but for the mist. As it was, it enabled the ships to get in to a range of about two and a half miles, at which distance they should have been able to destroy the whole place. The fortress at West Hartlepool promptly engaged the ships as soon as the commander knew their character. The commander inflicted some damage, and, indeed, was under the impression that he had driven the enemy off. The bombardment was heaviest here. Some five hundred shells were said to have been fired in the half-hour the firing lasted. The guns destroyed the gas holders, setting the gas on fire, shelled the railway stations, waterworks, electricity works, and shipbuilding yards. But little damage was done. The houses in the town, however, suffered badly. Many were blown to pieces; walls were torn down; roofs lifted off, and many lives were lost. Oddly enough, the light-cruiser patrol, and the destroyers *Doon* and *Hurdy*, engaged the bombarding vessels and sustained little damage; though, on the other hand, their attempts to get to close quarters to do more damage were unsuccessful. Their casualties were 7 killed and about 24 wounded. The garrison troops lost 7 killed and 14 wounded. Of civilians 119 men, women, and children were killed and nearly 400 wounded.

It seems impossible to suppose that a venture of this sort was anything more than wild revenge. What military advantage could the slaying a little mite in Hartlepool give? How could it profit them that a mother taking her two children by the hand should suddenly be killed? The waterworks and the gasworks were destroyed; but apart from that the blow fell upon civilians. The latest ship in the German fleet "afforded proof of the gallantry of the German navy," in the words of a German newspaper, by spending so many of her 12-inch shells on smashing houses to dust, and killing women and babies.

The bombardment of the Hartlepoons ended at 8.50 A.M., that of Whitby at 9.30. From the opening shots to the last about one hour and a half elapsed, and then the squadron turned and steamed off. So far as the British fleet was concerned they retired without let or hindrance; so far as was known at first, they returned without even the mishap of the first raid to mar the "proof of gallantry." But it was hinted in the official announcements that a "patrolling squadron endeavoured to cut them off." This is to put into very cold English the fact that Sir John Jellicoe knew of the movements of the German squadron and had prepared a lesson for them. A most powerful fleet of ships was assembled, and took up stations so as to intercept the German ships as they returned. There would be no fight. The German ships were to be met with such a volume of fire that they would stand as much at the mercy of the British sailors as British civilians had been at theirs but recently. The morning was, as on the occasion of the first raid, foggy; and this saved the German ships. For a moment, indeed, one of the battle cruisers of the waiting ships caught sight of the German ships as they passed through a break in the fog. All was prepared, but before the guns could open fire, the ships had passed again into the mist. They had, however, sighted the British ships, and changing their course they "retired at full speed." They were not seen again, and the terrible

strategy which had planned their destruction had for the time to go unchronicled and unknown. It is reported that, as on the first raid, the Germans suffered some mishaps, which were certainly not of their choice, but were not caused by the enemy, except the enemy which had twice saved them. The battle cruiser, *Von der Tann*, about which there was so much mystery later, is said to have rammed, in the fog, the light cruiser *Frauenlob*. Both suffered badly, the *Von der Tann* from damaged bows, while the *Frauenlob* was nearly sunk.

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It was nearly a month before the Germans attempted their next raid. In the meantime, the base, Cuxhaven, had been raided by British aeroplanes; but the German navy had done nothing at all. On the evening of 23rd January the squadron set out on its journey. It was, apparently, not so strong in capital ships as that which bombarded the East Coast in December. The *Von der Tann* was missing. According to the report we have given it was, for the present, *hors de combat*. But the squadron was accompanied by several light cruisers and two destroyer flotillas. Admiral Hipper was in command, and his precautions in case he were compelled to retire were typical of the change in modern naval warfare. A large minefield had been laid in the area north of Heligoland. Farther seaward a squadron of German submarines was waiting for any eventuality. Zeppelins and aeroplanes were ready on call at Heligoland.

As on the two previous occasions of a raid the British Admiral knew of the German movements, and arrangements were again made to intercept the German ships. The British squadron was the first battle-cruiser squadron, under Admiral Sir David Beatty. His command included the *Lion*, his flagship, the *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, *New Zealand*, and *Indomitable*. Three of these battle cruisers carried 13.5 guns, while the three German battle cruisers carried as their heaviest armament 12-inch guns, the same as the *New Zealand* and *Indomitable*. The three heaviest gunned of the British ships were capable of a speed of 28 to 28.5 knots, as against two of the German ships, though one of these, the *Seydlitz*, was capable of a higher speed than any of the battleships engaged. The *Blücher* was an armoured cruiser, whose heaviest guns were only 8.2 inches. Her speed, too, was low, being about the same as that of the slowest battle cruiser, the *New Zealand*.

Admiral Hipper may have hoped to achieve success by surprise as before; but it is extremely difficult to do anything in the North Sea which the ubiquitous submarine does not at once report to headquarters. Consequently, as Admiral Hipper steamed north-west Admiral Beatty steamed south for what he hoped would be the first battle between ships of the heaviest type. Battle cruisers had been engaged in the battle of Heligoland, and again in the Falklands battle; but this would be the first time in history that the huge ships had ever met. What Admiral Hipper's object was can only be guessed. It may have been to attack the British coast as before. Some naval critics have thought he was making for the Tyne. But, on the other hand, it may have been that he meant to engage the squadron, and endeavour to draw it off while his fastest ship made off on to the coast routes to make British commerce again insecure for a space. Some Dutch critics state that the squadron was to create a diversion during which a number of fast transports, already filled with troops, would dash across the North Sea, and endeavour to effect a landing in England. Whatever the object, Admiral Beatty's force saw the enemy ships as light was breaking on 24th January. They were then steaming off the southern



horn of the Dogger Bank. Immediately he took steps to intercept the cruisers. Full steam was worked up, and the ships started forward. Admiral Hipper equally promptly turned tail and steamed off for home, for his mined area and submarines. Flung out ahead on his left, as he steamed south, Admiral Beatty had the destroyer flotillas with the light cruisers *Arethusa*, *Aurora*, and *Undaunted*, all well known. The *Aurora*, commanded by Captain Wilmot Nicholson, led the flotillas, and about 7.25 he engaged the enemy destroyers. The German Admiral did not wait to see what was the nature of the attacking force. He had been steaming north-west. He went full speed south-east. On this course, too, Admiral Beatty was steaming with his five battle cruisers. At 7.30 the *Lion* came in sight of the German squadron, and at once shaped a course so as to run parallel to and not in the wake of the German ships, which were dropping mines. As yet the German cruisers were about fourteen miles distant. The two squadrons were now steaming south-east at the extraordinary rate of about thirty knots. This was far beyond what the *Indomitable* was designed for, and the stokers, who thus broke the record by their extraordinary exertions, were publicly congratulated when the Admiral signalled, "Well done, *Indomitable* stokers." The recognition was deserved, for the speed of a squadron is that of its slowest ship, and this was soon to be demonstrated. For the *Blücher* could not long maintain her lead of the British ships, and could not at all attain the full speed of her sister ships. The *Blücher* could only be a weakness to the squadron.

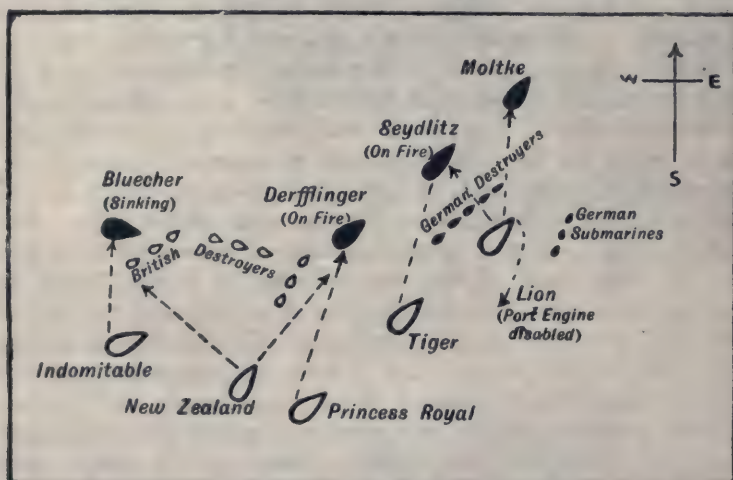
About 8.52, when the two squadrons had been rushing through the water at their highest speed for nearly an hour and a half, the *Lion* tried a first shot. The distance had been reduced from fourteen to not quite twelve miles. The shot fell short, but about twenty minutes later, at a range of nearly 18,000 yards, close on eleven miles, the *Lion* threw its first half-ton shell on to the armour belt of the *Blücher*. Not many minutes later the *Tiger* began to deal with the *Blücher*, and the *Lion* transferred its attentions to the *Derfflinger*. The German ships were, like the British, rushing through the water in line, and the *Derfflinger* was next ahead of the *Blücher*. At this extraordinary range of 18,000 yards, nearly eleven miles, the *Lion* got home salvo after salvo. Such a feat, even in a warfare which is almost entirely, at the end, a question of the most highly trained scientific skill, is surely almost beyond imagination. The two ships, moving at a speed of over thirty miles an hour, at such a distance presenting mere specks to each other, were fighting in dead earnest with mighty guns, and dealing one another terrible blows!

In about twenty-five minutes from the first shot the *Blücher* had fallen astern. She had been compelled to sustain a terrific bombardment from the 13.5-inch guns of the *Lion*, *Tiger*, and *Princess Royal* in turn. Each as it came into range took up the task, and even in so short a time the ship was disabled and in a terrible state. Dead and dying men lay about everywhere. She was on fire and full of holes. One shot from the huge guns of the battle cruisers had torn a gun turret bodily out of the ship and flung it over the side.

Meanwhile the battle cruisers had engaged the fellow-ships in the German line. The *Seydlitz*, the fastest of the squadron was leading, the *Moltke*, the next fastest being second. To her position the latter owed her comparative immunity. For the German destroyer flotilla had been ordered to steam between the squadrons, and their smoke, driven by the north-east wind, was massed about the *Moltke*, almost completely shrouding her from view. The *Lion* was engaging the *Seydlitz*, and this by 9.45 was observed to be on fire. The *Derfflinger*, under the guns of the *Princess*

*Royal*, was also burning. The *Tiger*, second of the British line, had been compelled to transfer her attentions to the *Blücher* and the *Seydlitz*, owing to her natural quarry being obscured by the smoke. To make matters worse, the German Admiral caused his destroyers to lie back so as to obscure the British aim still more. When it is remembered what a tiny speck the cruisers would show to each other at a distance of ten miles, the advantage of a smoke screen will be realised. The British destroyers and light cruisers had fallen back to allow the battle cruisers full play; but the destroyers were now ordered to keep off the German destroyers which were even threatening to attack. The British destroyers, handled with the utmost coolness and skill by Captain Meade, drove off the enemy ships. One of the British destroyers, the *Meteor*, was badly hit. Steaming between the two lines of battle cruisers, sometimes the object, or at any rate the recipient of German shells, the tiny vessel served its purpose.

Under cover of the smoke the German cruisers had changed their course, and were now steaming north. The *Blücher* had dropped out of the line, and was in a



Battle of 24th January. Second phase, 11.10 A.M.

hopeless position. The German destroyers again attacked, but the *Lion* and *Tiger* drove them off. About eleven o'clock the British cruisers began to enter the area prepared by the German Admiral. Submarines were observed approaching on the shore side of the chase, and threatening the *Lion*. Shortly afterwards the speed of the flagship was much reduced by a lucky shot from one of the German cruisers. A feed tank was pierced, putting the port engine out of use; and though the injury was not vital, the *Lion* could not any longer keep up with the chase. By this time the *Seydlitz* and *Derfflinger* had been on fire for an hour and a half, and the *Moltke*, owing to the changed tactics of the destroyers, had been receiving heavy punishment. Admiral Beatty at once left the *Lion*, and by means of the destroyer *Attack* took his flag to the *Princess Royal*; but he did not actually join this cruiser until nearly half past twelve. Meanwhile, the command had passed into the hands of Rear-Admiral Sir Archibald Moore. Two of the enemy ships seemed simply to require the *coup de grâce*, and the third was in a bad case; but the action was soon broken off, though the British commander had still the advantage in every way.



In the meantime the *Blücher* had been lying burning terribly, a helpless and hopeless wreck. The *Indomitable* had been left to deal with it, as the other battle cruisers swept north after the German squadron. The *Meteor*, not content with its exploits, approached, making fast circles about the ship, in the endeavour to get home a torpedo. But the crew of the *Blücher* were game to the last, and sent a shell through the *Meteor*, killing four men and wounding another. The *Arethusa* and the *Meteor* seemed to have discharged torpedoes at about the same time. The *Blücher* had now a heavy list. The *Arethusa* steamed closer still and prepared to finish her off. The crew, standing in admirable discipline, were warned by a British officer to jump into the water. They cheered and did so. The *Arethusa's* torpedo got home, the *Blücher* heeled over, those of the crew yet on board crowded to the side, and slipped down into the sea. Then she turned over and sank. The British boats at once got out, and 125 men were taken on board. More would have been saved, but for the appearance of a Zeppelin and an aeroplane on the scene. These at once began, with singular ineptitude, to drop bombs. If they had thought the *Blücher* a British ship their action would have been most brutal. This was probably the explanation, since the *Blücher*, like a battle cruiser and unlike other cruisers, had tripod masts.

Why the action was broken off so suddenly and so soon is still a mystery. The Press Bureau attributed it to the German submarines and minefield. It is possible that the submarines may have been the reason, though the dispatches do not make the suggestion. Admiral Beatty left the *Lion* at 11 35, and on the *Attack* steamed after the squadron, which he met "at noon retiring N N W." In the twenty-five minutes the squadron could not have covered more than a maximum of fifteen miles even in a following-on direction. As the ships were met retiring, they probably steamed only a few miles after the German cruisers, and then broke off the action. The German reports treated the battle as a victory for them, and painted the end of the engagement as a British retreat. This is completely untrue. The German fleet was saved from annihilation by the breaking off of the action at that point. In an hour they would have been sent to the bottom. It has been suggested that the British battle squadron steaming after their enemy caught a glimpse of part of the German Grand Fleet coming out to outflank them. Rear-Admiral Moore, it has been suggested, turning his attention for the moment to the larger force, at once lost the battered battle cruisers, and the other German ships turned tail when the British destroyers came in sight. According to the German report, the action was broken off seventy miles from the Heligoland minefield, and hence, if this be taken as true, the proximity of the minefield cannot have been the cause of the discontinuance of the action. The established facts are that Admiral von Ingenohl, commander-in-chief of the German navy, was superseded in command after the action, which suggests some reflection upon him, and Admiral Beatty distinctly states that he saw the periscopes of submarines.

The results of the battle were the sinking of the *Blücher*, the disabling for some time of two of the chief German battle cruisers, and the severe handling of the third and of a number of destroyers. On the British side, the *Lion* and the *Meteor* were slightly damaged. Six men were severely wounded on the *Lion*, on the *Tiger* an officer and nine men were killed, and four men were killed on the *Meteor*. It was, therefore, a brilliant British victory. The British gunnery was superb, and the German ships were fortunate to escape at all. Admiral Hipper showed himself a capable tactician. He handled his ships well and fulfilled the function for which

the action had been designed. The seamanship was splendid on the British side. The conduct of the engagement was almost faultless. The one point which is doubtful, the breaking off of the campaign, must remain in doubt until more is known of the actual conditions.

The main effect of the battle was to induce the German raiders to be a little more careful for the future. If one is to count in lives lost the Germans probably paid in full for their misdemeanours ; but it was in fair fight. The strategy of Admiral Jellicoe received a complete justification. It had always had the approval of the Admiralty, and even the public, in spite of the two raids, were content to trust what they could not understand to the minds which knew. The different tactics of the fight were a very striking commentary upon the differences in character between the two navies. The odds were not so terrible for the Germans that the British in their position would not have offered battle. Indeed, Admiral Cradock had just fallen in challenging heavy odds ; and Admiral Beatty had set his course to attack the squadron before he knew how strong it might be. The British offensive at sea had never been more brilliantly exhibited, and Admiral Beatty deserved commiseration for the mischance which snatched an overwhelming victory from him at the last moment.

#### XVIII. THE DARDANELLES : THE ATTACK FROM THE SEA.

THE first and gravest effect of the entry of Turkey into the war was the isolation of Russia from her allies. The Baltic was sealed by the German fleet. Winter sealed the northern port, Archangel ; and even at the best little traffic was possible through that port since its railway communications with the centre of Russia had not been designed for heavy traffic, and had a strictly limited carrying capacity. Winter sealed also Vladivostock, the eastern door of Siberia ; and hence, for the practical needs of a heavy campaign, the entry of Turkey into the war isolated Russia from the rest of the world. It is true that Japan could still send some war material ; but the route was long and devious, and, at the best, the carriage of ammunition and guns from the eastern limits of Siberia was but a shaky prop for the vital calls of the vast battle front of Russia.

The extent of her needs hardly requires elaboration. For decisive action in modern war an immense expenditure of ammunition is essential. Shell, both shrapnel and high explosive, is as necessary as troops. There are no substitutes for shell. Where it is lacking the commanders must pay in troops. No defence yet devised can protect men against a heavy bombardment of modern artillery. Elaborate dug-outs gave some protection, but even they were liable to be wrecked in a heavy bombardment. Without shell, offensive action is also impossible. The tremendous expenditure of shell has one other effect which rendered the isolation of Russia still more critical. Even the best modern heavy artillery will not long stand the strain of continuous use. The lighter artillery stands the strain more easily. These considerations press home the inference that war to-day is largely won in the factories, and that nations which are highly organised in this respect fight with an enormous advantage on their side. Germany, who entered upon the war with so great an advantage from long and thorough preparation, had this further asset, dependent upon her constant and continuous building up of stores of war material :



*the plant for, and the experience in, producing vast quantities of guns and ammunition.* To set the factories going at the highest pressure, to extend and organise them so that the maximum output could be secured, were operations instinctive to the German mind.

On the other hand, France and Great Britain had never felt the inspiration or the need to organise their energies to purposes which seemed to them so wholly unproductive. Furthermore, France is not numerically a mighty nation like Germany; Germany was in occupation of her chief coal and iron areas; and when, with splendid spirit, she called all her available men to the Colours, she could not give a very great impetus to her factories. Russia had only in comparatively recent years begun to organise the manufacture of war material on her own soil. Her population contained a smaller urban percentage than any other of the great Powers. Russia, therefore, could not possibly produce war material at the rate it was required, and was compelled to depend upon her allies for the supply of rifles, guns, and all sorts of ammunition. She had been quick to turn her great captures of Austrian guns to account; and, on more than one occasion in Galicia, the Austrians retreated after a decisive action under the fire of their own guns.

The isolation of Russia in winter, only recently understood sympathetically in Western Europe, was the reason for her consistent desire for such an entry into the Mediterranean as the possession of Constantinople and the Gallipoli Peninsula would have given her. Constantinople was the door; the Dardanelles was the vestibule. Both had for hundreds of years been in the possession of Turkey, and the fact became of cardinal importance when that country entered upon the war against its traditional friends, Great Britain and France. To send guns and ammunition to Russia meant to pass through the Dardanelles. To send some of her superfluous wheat to Britain and France, Russia must pass through the Dardanelles. The Straits very early attracted the attention of Mr. Churchill's vivid imagination. On the last day of August he arranged with Lord Kitchener for two staff officers to work out with two naval officers plans for the seizure of the Gallipoli Peninsula by a Greek army. This was one of the few known cases of true prevision in the war, for it was a month before Turkey joined Germany. Mr. Churchill not only foresaw the set of events, but also correctly gauged their chief implication. Turkey's entrance into the war would seal the Straits, but if they could be forced, how many desirable results would follow. Even economically, Russia would benefit to a very great extent by unfettered intercourse with her allies and with the rest of the world. Her trade would be resuscitated; and her armies might take the field as victoriously as their numbers, fine leading, and fine spirit deserved. Moreover, the Balkan nations—Rumania, Bulgaria, and Greece—living spiritually and sympathetically so remote from Great Britain, would receive a lesson which might quite reasonably dispose them to cast in their lot with the Entente Powers. And, finally, if the Dardanelles should be forced and Constantinople taken, this would mean the end of Turkey as a fighting power to be reckoned with. Such considerations determined the Allies to make the attempt to force the Straits; and this decision was the first gleam of strategic insight on the Allies' part in the first phase of the war.

The undertaking was not a light and easy one; and it had one condition which might have given the Allies pause. It could not, once begun, be abandoned without grave consequences. Failure would be a positive stimulus to the impressionable Balkan States, then wavering as to their course, to champion the cause of the central

empires, Austria-Hungary and Germany. One, Bulgaria, had at the beginning only these empires to look to for any of the advantages she desired. The success of the Entente Powers meant the extension of Serbia; and advantage could only come to Bulgaria through Serbia or Greece either surrendering or losing part of their territory. Greece saw through the eyes of Venizelos a chance for which she craved in Asia Minor; and, at that statesman's direction, was willing to surrender valuable territory to Bulgaria as the price of her neutrality. But as the gain in Asia Minor meant the active co-operation with France and England, the whole project fell through. The king would have none of it. His wife was a sister of the German Emperor, and his own personal sympathies and instincts leaned to Germany.



The Dardanelles Campaign—General Sketch Map of the Scene of the Operations.

At the very beginning of his reign he had made a visit to Germany, during which he made a speech which required much skilful diplomacy to explain as not a direct insult to France. The Rumanian dynasty was Hohenzollern and pro-German. The Allies, then, dare not add strength to the already strong pro-German elements in the Balkan Peninsula by a seeming impotence to crush the enemy whom these same states had crushed with ease. And the Farther East, with great British possessions, also regarded the operations with an interest which was not a little ominous.

The Dardanelles Straits stretch over forty miles between the Ægean Sea and Gallipoli Strait, which is the door of the Sea of Marmora. At the eastern exit of the Sea of Marmora the Bosphorus guards the entrance into the Black Sea. The

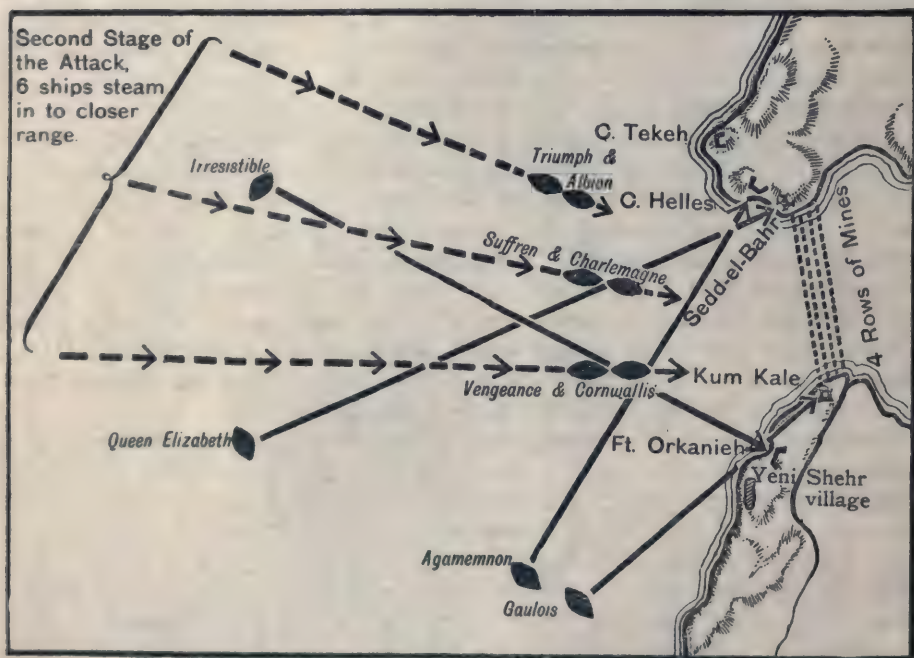


Bosporus itself would have to be forced ; but if the Dardanelles were in the hands of the Allies, and Constantinople under their guns, the Bosporus could not make any determined resistance. Everything pivoted on the forty miles of the Dardanelles. Heavily fortified at both ends, the Straits were still more heavily fortified at a point, some ten miles from the Ægean, called the Narrows, where they are only a mile wide. The Turks had also skilfully mined the Straits. They had a number of torpedo boats, and they had on their side a formidable current which would carry floating mines with a considerable speed from the northern end to the southern, where they enter the Ægean.

On 3rd November a French and British squadron bombarded the forts within range, and then steamed off. The only reasonable explanation of such an operation is that the ships were taking the range and endeavouring to locate the forts ; but the Turks were thus early advertised of the Allies' intention. No operations of sufficient power to force the formidable fortifications could have been undertaken at that moment. Admiral von Spee's squadron was still at large in the Pacific, and had, only two days before, defeated Admiral Cradock. That defeat had to be avenged and the enemy squadron swept from the seas. The *Emden* and *Königsberg* had not yet been caught. Under the circumstances no naval force of any significance could be detached for work against the Dardanelles. There was a naval contingent, however, in the neighbourhood, and it was a performance by a unit of this which stirred the world with its daring. Lieutenant-Commander Holbrook was in charge of the submarine B11, from Malta. The submarine was one of the oldest boats, but the commander, like the commander of all the naval small craft, had a pride in his boat. Some Turkish ships kept watch over the mines in the Straits. On 14th December B11 dived under five rows of mines and torpedoed the Turkish battleship *Messoudieh*. On his safe return he was awarded the V.C.

No further action took place for three months ; but meanwhile the forcing of the Dardanelles had been the subject of considerable discussion. At a War Council on 25th November the project was mooted, and again as a joint naval and military operation. On 2nd January the British Ambassador in Petrograd telegraphed that Russia, heavily attacked in the Caucasus, looked for some diversion against Turkey. Russia had already completely beaten the Turks in that quarter, though the news had not yet reached Petrograd ; and, in any case, no possible diversion could give immediate relief. But on 3rd January a reply was sent promising a demonstration. At this point Lord Kitchener informed Mr. Churchill that the Dardanelles was the one place where a demonstration might check the flow of troops to the Caucasus, but that he could spare no troops for the operation. It was this which inspired Mr. Churchill's telegram to Vice-Admiral Carden asking him if he thought the Dardanelles could be forced by ships alone. The admiral thought an extended operation with a large number of ships might be successful. He was asked for and sent a detailed plan for the operation, and this was approved by the War Councils of 13th and 28th January, in spite of the disapproval of practically all the influential men at the Admiralty. During February the War Council gradually revised their first conclusion, and began to arrange for a joint operation ; but the orders for the naval attack had gone forth, and the bombardment opened on 19th February. A powerful fleet of battleships and battle cruisers, accompanied by flotillas and aided by a strong French squadron, under the command of Vice-Admiral Sackville H. Carden, opened a heavy bombardment upon the forts at the entrance to the

Dardanelles. These were four : two on the European side, and two on the Asiatic. Forts Sedd-el-Bahr and Kum Kale, on the European and Asiatic sides respectively, were armed with 10.2-inch guns. These guns were sufficiently heavy and of sufficient range to impose a certain respect upon the bombarding warships, which accordingly opened fire at long range. With 12-inch guns the ships could keep out of range and yet pour in a deadly fire. For nearly seven hours a heavy bombardment from long range was kept up, the chief objectives being the Cape Helles Battery, north of Sedd-el-Bahr, and Kum Kale. At about 3 P.M., six battleships, three French and three British, closed in and bombarded at shorter ranges, while the battle cruiser *Inflexible* and the battleship *Agamemnon* kept up their long-range fire. The forts both north and south of the Straits then replied ; but those on the European side ceased to return any fire before the bombardment ended, and only one on the



Attack on the Outer Forts (Dardanelles).

Asiatic side was still replying. No ships were hit, though the Turkish *communiqué* said three had suffered, including a flagship. The Allied fire was controlled by seaplanes from the seaplane ship *Ark Royal*. The bombardment was resumed on the following day after careful aerial reconnaissance. The Turks at once began to divert the world by their *communiqués*. Coloured with an Eastern imagination, these suggested that the heaviest bombardment had not silenced the forts, and had only killed one man and wounded another. On the other hand, three of the ships had been damaged !

One of the odd vicissitudes to which these operations were liable made its appearance at this moment. Misty weather meant the abandonment of the attack, with the possibility of repairing the ravages of the bombardment to some extent, and the bringing up of heavy siege batteries. But the weather cleared up again, and on



Thursday, 25th February, an even heavier bombardment began. The newly completed super-Dreadnought, *Queen Elizabeth*, with its huge 15-inch shells, appeared on the scene. The *Queen Elizabeth* was the most formidable battleship which had ever taken the seas. She embodied, moreover, a number of novel features. Her designed speed was twenty-five knots—the speed, that is to say, of the fastest liner afloat, the *Lucania*. Her fuel was oil only. Her armour belt was immensely strong, and she could throw almost a ton of explosive with the most perfect accuracy over twelve miles. The introduction of this element into the bombardment of the forts was of the first importance. In one hour and a half *Queen Elizabeth*, which, by the incurable habit of soldiers and sailors, earned a slang description—"Big Lizzie"—put Cape Helles fort out of action; and it was finished off by *Vengeance* and *Cornwallis*, which, under cover of long-range fire, ran in to close range.

But the fort, before this, had secured one hit on *Agamemnon* at a range of between six and seven miles, and the shell killed three men and seriously wounded five. While *Vengeance* and *Cornwallis* were standing in to complete the reduction of Cape Helles forts, the two forts on the Asiatic side opened a very slow and inaccurate fire. They had been under heavy long-range fire from *Agamemnon*, *Irresistible*, and *Gaulois*; and *Suffren* and *Charlemagne* now closed in to little more than a mile away, with *Vengeance*, *Triumph*, and *Albion*, to complete their reduction. The battleships steamed in, round and out again, firing almost all the time. In less than half an hour the forts presented the appearance of untidy mounds of earth. Everything was in ruins. By 5.15 P.M. the four forts guarding the entrance to the Dardanelles were reduced.

At once sweeping operations to remove mines began, under the cover of a heavy fire from several battleships. The following day the Straits had been cleared of mines for a distance of about four miles; and *Albion*, *Majestic*, and *Vengeance* advanced and opened fire upon Fort Dardanus on the Asiatic side, and several battleships took the four forts at the entrance in rear. After a heavy fire the Turks fell back from them, and landing-parties went ashore in the afternoon and completely demolished the forts of Cape Helles, Sedd-el-Bahr, Orkanieh, and partially demolished Kum Kale. The men blew up the magazines, and the explosions sent huge pillars of flame and smoke to the skies. A number of smaller guns near Kum Kale were also destroyed. The Turkish *communiqués* continued to publish accounts for which the adjective "untrue" is no fitting description. When the forts were completely destroyed the Turkish reports still asserted that the warships were retreating out of range of the demolished guns.

One consideration now began to make itself felt. The reduction of these four forts, all of which mounted old guns, had occupied a full week. They were favourably situated for attack, and no gun in any of the forts could equal in calibre some of the guns of any of the warships engaged, with the sole exception of *Triumph*, which, as its heaviest armament, had four 10-inch. But besides *Triumph*, there were engaged *Queen Elizabeth*, *Inflexible*, *Agamemnon*, *Cornwallis*, *Vengeance*, *Irresistible*, *Albion*, and *Majestic*, with the French battleships *Suffren*, *Gaulois*, *Charlemagne*, and *Bouvet*, all of which, except *Queen Elizabeth*, with its 15-inch guns, had 12-inch guns. Against the ten 10.2-inch guns of the forts there were forty-six 12-inch and eight 15-inch guns on the battleships. This gives some idea of the advantages of a fort as compared with a warship. It is probable that none of the guns on the battleships were as old as any of those in the forts.

On 1st March, *Triumph*, *Ocean*, and *Albion* entered the Straits and opened a bombardment upon the batteries on Kephez Point, which lies some ten miles up the Straits—that is to say, from two to three miles from the Narrows. The battleship fire was returned; but it made little impression, for that night the Straits were swept up to within one and a half miles of the fort on Kephez Point. During the same day four French battleships, in the Gulf of Saros, to the north of the Gallipoli Peninsula, bombarded the batteries and communications at the neck of the peninsula, about Bulair. On Tuesday, 2nd March, the fort on Kephez Point and the fort opposite to it on the European side (Fort Soghandere) were bombarded, and towards dusk the latter, heavily damaged, ceased firing. The Russian cruiser *Askold* joined the Allied squadron on this day. On 3rd and 4th March further operations were conducted within the Straits, and *Queen Elizabeth* began the bombardment of the Narrows from the *Ægean*.

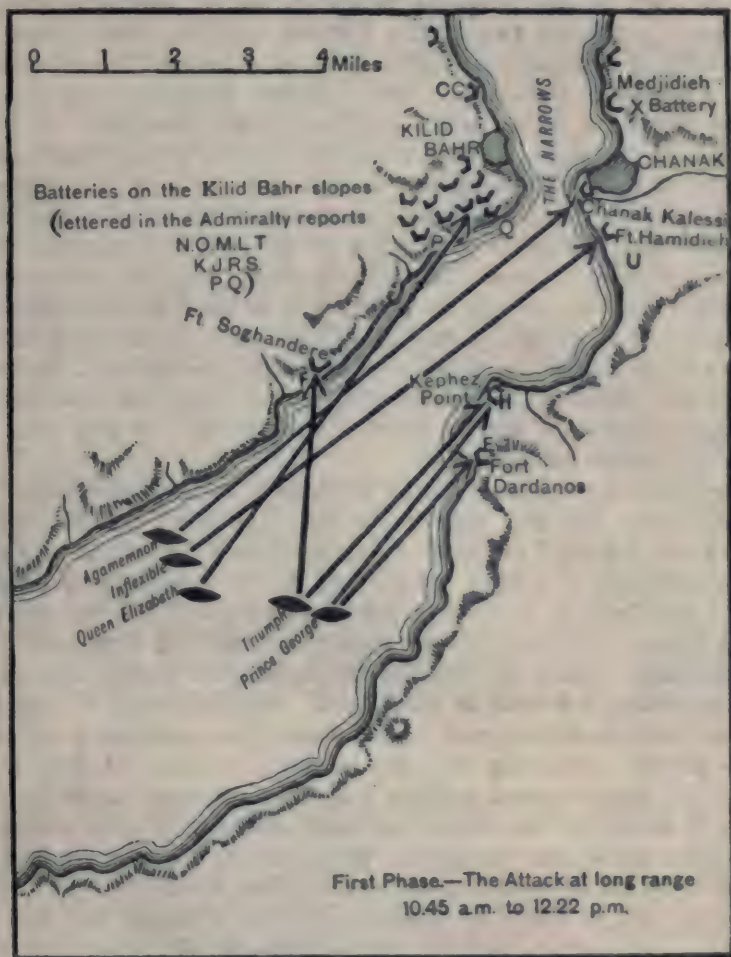
The problem of forcing the Dardanelles is almost as old as history. Nature has made the position of immense strength, and properly fortified it should be almost impregnable. But in studying the problem no one had dreamed of the romantic development which made it possible for a huge floating fort like *Queen Elizabeth* to steam up and down on the north side of Gallipoli Peninsula and hurl its massive shells across the land to the forts lining the Straits. The Narrows bristled with forts. At Kilit Bahr alone there were ten forts, and one at least mounted 14-inch guns. The fire was confined to three of the forts, and was supported by *Inflexible* and *Prince George*; *Irresistible*, *Canopus*, *Cornwallis*, and *Albion* observing the fire from within the Straits. Marine brigades were landed at Sedd-el-Bahr and Kum Kale to clear the ground further, and there were subsidiary operations on the coast of Asia Minor, farther south. Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Peirse arrived with a squadron of battleships and cruisers off Smyrna, and opened a methodical bombardment on Fort Yeni Kale. The bombardment was so successful that it was resumed at closer range.

The bombardment of the Narrows' forts continued during the next few days, and on 7th March *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson* engaged them by direct fire under the cover of fire from *Gaulois*, *Charlemagne*, *Bouvet*, and *Suffren*. After a heavy bombardment, at a range of between seven and eight miles, Hamidieh on the Asiatic and Rumili Medjidieh on the European side, both of them mounting 14-inch guns, were heavily damaged, and explosions occurred in each of them. Another of the strongest forts on the European side had ceased to reply two days before; and the formidable maze of defences was thus being reduced. Each day one or more warships cut off the peninsula from the mainland by watching the Bulair Peninsula. Each day, too, the success and even the safety of the operations were ensured by the daring exploits of seaplanes. Concealed guns, which were a constant source of anxiety, can only be discovered by flying very low, and the danger of such an operation need not be laboured. On one of these occasions seaplane 172 (Flight-Lieutenant Bromet, with Lieutenant Brown) was hit no fewer than twenty-eight times. Sometimes the pilot lost control and the seaplane nose-dived into the sea. Often the men were wounded. But the work went on successfully.

On 8th March *Queen Elizabeth*, with four battleships, entered the Straits and attacked Rumili Medjidieh; but the weather was bad and little progress was made. The *Gaulois* silenced Fort Dardanus, and was congratulated by Admiral Carden. Indeed, this was not the only French battleship which engaged the forts with brilliant



enterprise and skill. The *Suffren*, flying the flag of Admiral Guépratte, steamed to the limit of the minefield and fired many rounds. She came under heavy fire, and a splinter of shell fell at the Admiral's feet. A very daring exploit was performed a few days later by *Amethyst*, a light cruiser which had already performed excellent work in protecting landing-parties and picking off isolated enemy detachments. During the night of the 13th she carried out a reconnaissance up the Straits and destroyed the cable. Steaming at full speed with lights out, she braved the



The Attack on the Narrows.

forts, and although struck frequently at short range by fire from the forts and by concealed howitzers, which caused numerous casualties in the engine-room, she returned with little material damage.

Considerable way had been made when the operations of 18th March took place. The Straits had been cleared and made safe so far as forts were concerned for nearly ten miles. At least three of the most formidable of the fortifications at the Narrows had ceased to give any sign of life. Mine-sweeping was consistently carried out ;

and after ten days—assuming the waters safe—the French and British battleships made a combined attack upon the Narrows' forts. In the morning *Queen Elizabeth*, *Inflexible*, *Agamemnon*, and *Lord Nelson* bombarded the chief forts on both sides of the Narrows, concentrating upon Hamidieh and Chanak on the Asiatic side, and the three largest of the European forts. At the same time *Triumph* and *Prince George* bombarded the forts nearer the entrance on both sides. A heavy reply was made by howitzers and field guns. A little after noon *Suffren*, *Gaulois*, *Charlemagne*, and *Bouvet* steamed up the Straits to engage the forts at shorter range. The forts replied strongly, especially two at the Narrows and two lower down. But the concentrated fire of so many heavy guns in an hour reduced them to silence. The battleships *Vengeance*, *Irresistible*, *Albion*, *Ocean*, *Swiftsure*, and *Majestic* then advanced to relieve the vessels which had been under heavy fire. It was at this point the first of the day's mishaps occurred. As the French ships were leaving their positions after a very daring and brilliant piece of work, the *Bouvet* struck a mine near Erenkeui village, about four miles within the Straits, and sank in less than three minutes. Meanwhile the attack on the forts was being continued while the minesweepers were at work; but a little after 4 P.M. the *Irresistible* was seen to have a heavy list, and she left the line to sink in less than two hours. Her loss, too, was attributed to striking a mine. A little after 6 P.M. *Ocean* also struck a mine. Fortunately almost the whole crew of each of the British ships were rescued under heavy fire. Most of the remaining ships had sustained some damage. The *Inflexible* had her forward control position wrecked by a heavy shell, and was, therefore, out of action for repairs.

The mines used were probably what are known as Leon torpedoes. They can be fired from a tube, like any ordinary torpedo; but they can also be allowed to drift in the water, adjusted to rise at a certain moment, or to sink at a given time. They are not ordinary torpedoes, in that they do not contain the principle of their own action. But they can be most terrible weapons; and this one day proved the fact beyond dispute. The material loss they caused was not formidable. Two British battleships had almost reached the Dardanelles to replace any casualties in ships, and the French loss could be made good. But the sinking of three battleships upon one day, and the damaging of several others when constant progress had been announced, caused a searching of hearts in many quarters. A French statesman was reported to have declared publicly that the operations would be carried on. This is more illuminating than almost any other incident. That it had even reached the point when it is thought necessary to state that the operations will be continued is indicative of the extraordinary shock people had received.

The crucial fact is that the difficulties of the situation had been generally misconceived. The public, and it seems probable Mr. Churchill, formed no sufficient estimate of the difficulties of the operation. The battleships could not closely approach the forts of the Narrows. Mines were continually being floated on the current, and at several points on the shores torpedo tubes had been fixed. Mine-sweeping was absolutely necessary, and yet its difficulties were immense. The Gallipoli Peninsula—even more than the coast strip of Asia Minor—is puckered all over with hills and valleys. Such country offers splendid cover for guns. The Turks under German officers had brought up numbers of howitzers and field guns, and these were moved about with a surprising speed. The result was that the battleships were completely unable to deal with this constant and serious menace



to the mine-sweeping operations. There were no targets to fire at. A gun, even if located by aerial reconnaissance, might be moved to another place of concealment before the ship could be informed, pick up the range, and fire. Further, even when the forts looked like and were ruins, the guns were frequently quite intact. This was discovered by a landing-party at the entrance of the Straits. Under a terrible fire the Turks would take cover and leave the forts, only to return when the fire died down.

The sea attack on the Dardanelles fortifications was, in fact, the struggle with a theory. The majority of naval men held that ships would be at a disadvantage in the contest with forts, because of their vulnerability, their inability to provide any certain system of registering hits on land objects, and the uncertainty of their ranging from a moving platform against the fire from stable platforms. The losses of 18th March tended to reinforce this body of opinion, though the Turks and Germans maintain that success was at hand, and that the losses could have been afforded.

The abandonment of the attack was even more surprising than its inception. With the exception of Enver, no one of any importance in Constantinople imagined that the fleet would fail to get through. Trains were waiting with steam up to carry the government and diplomatic body to Asia Minor. The technical officers at the Narrows thought that, with the shortage of ammunition, they could only hold out a few hours when the attack was resumed. Mr. Churchill wished to resume at once. Lord Fisher and Sir A. Wilson agreed. But on 22nd March, Admiral de Robeck, who had succeeded Admiral Carden, after discussing the situation with General Hamilton, decided to await the concentration of the troops.

It is quite clear that a landing in force must have been made sooner or later, since the Dardanelles would have to be *maintained open* to be of any value, and combined sea and land operations were now being prepared. General Birdwood wished to land at once. But Kitchener had ordered Hamilton not to land "if he could avoid it," and certainly to wait for the arrival of the 29th Division. As a result the astonished German and Turkish gunners gained a long respite when they felt themselves on the verge of defeat. The history of the world turned upon a few days; but there was no one at the Dardanelles sufficiently clear-headed to grasp the issues and to seize one of the supreme chances of the war.

## XIX. THE WESTERN FRONT IN WINTER—NIBBLING.

At the beginning of winter the Germans and the Allies seemed by consent to rest on their oars. The long lines stretched from the coast to the Swiss frontier, and little or no change seemed to occur in them. Yet winter saw some movement in the positions which was of importance to the final victory of the Allies. It was a period of limited offensives whose rôle was to keep alive the offensive spirit of the troops, assist in the attrition of the enemy, and prepare the way for the general offensive.

General Joffre is reported to have described his early strategy during what has been called the "deadlock" in the West as "nibbling." It is a good word, and it aptly describes the fighting over the whole of the Western front. There were no sudden great advances. After the battles of the Marne the lines were extended to the coast. Then came the massed attacks upon Ypres and the Ypres-Nieuport section

of the line. These may be said to have settled down by mid-November, and then began that long stretch of months during which, despite occasional announcements of victories and successes, the opposing lines seemed to stand still. This situation, depressingly spoken of as the "deadlock," could only be galling to those non-combatant onlookers who visualised the enemy in active occupation of nearly the whole of Belgium, and of a considerable strip of Northern and North-Eastern France. The view they took of the situation may be fairly represented in this way: Two opposing lines of antagonist armies, stretching over four hundred miles, were so evenly matched that neither side, in spite of its utmost efforts, could gain the advantage. But the Germans were on the soil of the Allies, living upon its resources, administering its affairs. There could be no doubt that it was the business of the Allies to clear their country of the enemy at least. If they were to crush Prussian militarism they must not only clear the Allied soil; they must advance and occupy German soil. As they were not doing so, they were unable to do so.

There is this much truth in such a view, that the Allies undoubtedly were not in a position to initiate a general offensive. They were paying the penalty of unpreparedness. But when such pessimists went on to picture the position as remaining either the same or more favourable to the Germans, and to suggest that the general offensive could *never* be carried out, they were reasoning without any competent military knowledge. With the settling down in November on the lines from the coast to the Swiss frontier, new conditions had begun to rule the fortunes of the German armies. They were exactly described as siege conditions, though the siege only began strictly in March. A siege means no more than that an enemy is contained within lines, and must suffer a continual loss of all essential elements of his power, while those of the containing army remain constant or increase. This was the precise position of the Austro-German armies. They were shut in from the Swiss frontier to the North Sea coast by the Allied armies. From Nieuport to the mouth of the Baltic the British navy held them in, and permitted to pass in only what they wished. Unwisely, the Allies chose to allow cotton to pass, for some months, to avoid friction with neutral States. From the Baltic to the Rumanian frontier the Russian line contained them, and the other boundary was neutral territories and Servia—the British blockade sifting all ships. The supplies of petrol and rubber very early began to cause some anxiety. Food was enough, but not plentiful. There was sufficient, but not ample copper for munitions. When the import of cotton was stopped, the chief ingredient of modern explosives ceased to be limitless. There was no possibility of starving the Central Empires out; but they were being slowly starved of some of the essential material elements of military operations. And they were slowly losing the most essential element of all campaigns—men. The French official survey put down their relative loss as two to one.

The causes of this relatively higher consumption of men are not difficult to see. There was first the German military habit of the massed formation. They had, in effect, revived the classical phalanx. Men were marched up to carry positions by sheer weight. Massed together so that they almost touched one another, the men were a splendid mark for the rifles, machine guns, and shrapnel of the Allies. They were literally mowed down, the effect produced being quite disproportionate to the loss incurred. Another reason of the disproportionate loss in men during this period was the inferiority of their aerial work. Artillery is only thoroughly useful when its firing can be accurately controlled; but the fact that the air reconnaissance



of the Allies, and particularly the British, quickly attained a complete though temporary ascendancy, made it a natural sequence that the Allied artillery should be more efficient. A further consideration made its presence felt as the trench war dragged on—the German ammunition ceased to be limitless, and where there is any consideration of this sort, advances against entrenched positions can only be exceedingly costly.

One final and vital consideration still remains. General Joffre turned out to be not only that rare thing, a really strong man—he was found to be a great and prudent general. Even if both sides had remained quiescent the operations of siege conditions still meant that the Germans were growing relatively weaker day by day. British armies recruited in large numbers were training for the general offensive and becoming more efficient day by day. Russia's vast resources in men similarly were growing more and more available, but General Joffre had adopted tactics which encouraged the Germans to waste their men. All over the long line he "kept on nibbling," and the nibbles were at points carefully selected. They were at positions which were good jumping-off grounds for an Allied general offensive. The Germans naturally realised this, and were, therefore, driven to counter-attack in close formation. The whole of the extended line of trenches was not so much a line which, changed a little here or there, still remained an extremely formidable obstacle, as a line covering a number of vital points, which seized, the line could no longer hold. An army fights on its communications, and it was at points commanding centres of communications that General Joffre most persistently nibbled.

The same sort of strategy was applied from end to end of the Allied line. At the northernmost end of the line the Germans were kept in a constant state of nervous tension. It was thought that the British would make a landing near the Dutch frontier and thus isolate Ostend; but, while this was never a serious consideration with the Allies,\* in the first phase of the war, they were intent upon working from Nieuport up towards Ostend. The Allied line here at first ran along the western bank of the Yser river to Nieuport, which it included, then crossed the river, followed the canal until it was crossed by the Nieuport-Ypres railway. It included Rams-capelle, and stretched thence to the south of Dixmude. Between the railway and the Yser was the area flooded by the Belgians. The Belgian and French troops began to make progress in this quarter on Christmas Eve. Their flank was protected from the sea by British warships. On 28th December they opened a vigorous attack upon the German trenches, and carried the village of St. Georges, on the Yser, some two miles east of Nieuport, inflicting considerable loss on the enemy in so doing. The operations, minute, and not of the first importance in themselves, had been conducted with great persistence and skill. The troops worked little by little along the coast towards Lombartzyde. A further advance and Lombartzyde was rendered untenable. Then working on to Westende, they made the capture of St. Georges possible, and so the line was flung across the Yser.

Another advance, but of much greater importance, was that of the French south of La Bassée. This town had been in German possession from the first appearance of the British in that quarter. It had defied all attempts at capture. Strongly defended upon the east and north by the heavily fortified higher ground, it proved an almost impregnable fortress. But it was of the highest importance to the Germans, and hence the repeated attempts to secure possession of it. La Bassée

\* Though we now know that the British favoured such a plan.

made a dent on the Allied line, which, if it could have been driven forward, would have given the Germans what they so much craved. Driven to Béthune it would have given them one of the most important junctions of the north. If the Allied line had been pierced there, not only Béthune but also Hazebrouck, commanding between them four main lines to the coast, would have fallen into German hands. A halt to the advance was called by the British possession of Givenchy, some three miles due west, and Cuinchy, about the same distance south-west. The strength of La Bassée rested upon its rail and road communications north and south, and to take it the only feasible means was to make the communications insecure. To the south of La Bassée lay the château of Vermelles, which, standing not a mile from the railway, commanded both rail and road. It was at this point the French chose to attack; and with a spirit which would not be denied, they carried the château at the beginning of December, thus weakening the position at La Bassée.

Farther south the French captured Albert and the village of La Boisselle, where the success was achieved by daily and nightly fighting in the tombs and vaults of the old churchyard. Another advance was of so great importance that the Germans, to retake the position, threw a considerable force into the field; and the French not only lost the position, but were thrown back over the Aisne. It has been pointed out that above the Aisne the rising ground breaks into spurs. The French at the beginning of January had worked up two adjacent valleys north of Soissons, and secured the height, Hill 132, between. Some three and a half miles farther east they also secured a footing on the plateau of Vregny. These two positions were of immediate and cardinal importance to the Germans. From Vregny the important railway junction (for Laon) at Anizy le Château was commanded, and the two positions dominated all the immediate communications to the west of the Oise. General von Kluck, who still faced his old opponent, Maunoury, counter-attacked in great force for several days without making much impression upon the gallant French troops—some 12,000 to 15,000—who had taken the hill.

Kluck then threw into the action heavy reinforcements, amounting to three or four divisions. Rain had begun to fall heavily; the river was rising ominously, and reinforcements could not be got across the flooded stream. The bridges at Venizel and Missy were swept away. A new bridge was hastily constructed during the night of the 13th, but it had been of no use before it was swept away. Ammunition began to fail. It was stored across the river, where the reinforcements lay; but the French were cut off. The French charged the advancing Germans time after time. Some used the bayonet, others clubbed their rifles. They had to fall back. They stood at the villages of Cuffies and Crouy, which they had taken as a preliminary to seizing the two heights. The villages were now ruins, and gave them no shelter. They fell back again. A bridge had been flung over the river, and would hold for a short space; so the men were withdrawn while the battery of artillery covering their retreat used its four last shells. Then, finally, the officer in charge, his arm already broken, fired the last shell, made the guns useless, and ran over the river. The Germans crowded over bridges higher up the Aisne, and even penetrated to the suburbs of Soissons. But they never secured a hold there, the net result of the operations being that the Germans recovered the ground seized by the British in September, including a bridgehead.

Of equal importance were the movements in the Champagne district. The line in September ran from Souain through Perthes lès Hurlus to Ville sur Tourbe, on the



west of the Argonne. The importance of this section of the line was the railway, which ran a little north of the French line at Souain to the small gap between the Argonne Forest and the Forest of Boule, called Grand Pré. A line connects Grand Pré with the east of the Argonne. If, therefore, the gap could be seized the German forces would be separated. If a strong movement could be made north of Grand Pré the Germans might be shepherded away from Luxemburg and their bases, whose communications ran through that territory. The most severe struggle went on for several months in this quarter. Advances of a few yards were made at great cost ; and then counter-attacks would rob the victor of all advantage.

During December, January, and February the struggle was seldom interrupted over this stretch of ground, which measures laterally not more than fourteen miles and not two in a north and south line. The country is bare and barren except for small pine plantations, which take some root in the chalky soil. The centre of the struggle was a small German redoubt in front of Beauséjour Farm. The first attack in this quarter was made in January, when the work, which held some five hundred men, was taken. A counter-attack secured all but a tiny foothold in the southern section, where the French held out for a fortnight. On 16th February it was taken and lost again, retaken and lost once more. A week later the French had again seized the position, and held it against repeated counter-attacks. At length they were driven out again. On the 27th, they had taken all but a tiny part of the trenches on the northern side, and on the following day that too fell into their hands.

A point not two miles farther west, a low swell of land which looks down into the valley of the rivulet Dormoise, was also violently contested. It changed hands time and again, but fell into the hands of the French on 26th February, to provide a point of attack for many days by the Prussian Guard from the British front. A wooded redoubt, a mile and a half to the west of Perthes lès Hurlus and just above the road, was even more violently contested, and only fell into the hands of the French on 7th March.

The greatest extent of the advance in these weeks of fighting hardly amounts to a mile ; at points it was less than a quarter of a mile. But it was an advance of importance. The Germans were made to deplete parts of their line elsewhere, to safeguard the threatened quarter. The losses on both sides could not have been less than about 50,000 men, a fifth of the probable number of the French engaged. But the losses were heavier on the German side. The French "75," the best light piece on the field, with the heavy guns operated by the French gunners, who were expert artillerists, prepared the French advance, and made terribly costly every attempt to retake the positions. Held, they were useful ; lost they had still fulfilled a use, the most vital in this siege warfare, of having made the Germans waste their men in expensive counter-attacks.

Towards the end of the year the French troops in Upper Alsace were reinforced, and when the snow fell and hardened they began to improve their positions. The gallant Chasseurs Alpins speedily seized points of tactical importance towards Altkirk and Steinbach. More German troops were brought up, and Hill 425, west of Cernay, and Hartmannsweilerkopf, west of Steinbach, were both recaptured and cleared—the latter was very cleverly first cut off by the Germans. But, on the whole, the advantage remained with the French, who succeeded in building a wider and stronger bastion in front of Belfort. The salient at St. Mihiel was also attacked, and its area constricted by a converging advance from the positions about Verdun

and from the direction of the Grand Couronné of Nancy. General Sarraill also conducted a series of attacks in the forests of the Argonne, which improved his Verdun defences.

So the winter wore on into spring. There were numerous other small gains, and nowhere did the French fall back except north-east of Soissons. The net result of these tactics was that General Joffre preserved the spirit of his men, pinned down German troops which would otherwise have been flung against Russia, and secured a number of footholds with profound sagacity and prevision. But the cost was heavy, and we cannot but reflect that, if the Allies had these troops to waste, they might have been used to better advantage. Used at that time at the Dardanelles they would have secured success and shortened the war by two years. Even the coastal adventure, which the restless genius of Mr. Churchill had conceived, offered a better return for so great an expenditure. But it was the fate of both sides in the war to plunge heavily on costly and inconclusive strategy while distrusting every gleam of genius. The stereotyped alone seemed to justify full trust, whereas the only hope lay in originality and surprise.



# PART III.

## THE SIEGE WAR.

### BOOK I.

#### THE DUEL WITH RUSSIA (March-Sept. 1915).

##### I. THE BLOCKADES.

No war can be waged in any part of the world to-day without in some degree affecting the fortunes of the great nations at least. Investments are so widely placed and so widely interdependent, that hardly any part of the globe suffers without every other part suffering in sympathy. But a war not only crosses the interests of neutrals in this indirect manner, it creates a situation in which the ordinary rights of neutrals, to a greater or less extent, fall into abeyance. Clearly a neutral's right of trading must cease, or else any sort of siege or blockade would become impossible.

When a victorious army has thrown its lines about a fortress or city, all access to the besieged place is forbidden. This situation is one of the most ancient and widely accepted in the history of warfare. Yet, of course, it is a manifest invasion of the rights of neutrals. What conditions for trade were created by the siege of Paris in 1870; but no neutral claimed his right of free trading in face of the German lines of investment. The adjustment of the rights of belligerents and of neutrals in this case has from time immemorial been solved by the complete surrender of neutral rights. The case is far otherwise in that siege which takes place from the sea, and which is known as a blockade. No blockade in modern history has been carried on without a certain amount of friction between the blockading belligerent and neutrals. It is clear that the blockade of any considerable territory imposes a very great hardship upon neutrals. A large State blockaded means an amount of trade at once cut off, which may be represented by a turn-over of some hundreds of millions sterling. Such a thing cannot happen without detriment to the well-being of thousands of people who may have no concern whatever in the war.

The situation of a siege by water has never, then, been accepted with the same unanimity. A complicated body of law and custom has grown up around it, which has been shaped to meet the various conflicting claims and to remove the many causes of possible friction. In this war the invasion of the rights of neutrals could not fail to be very great. The Allies were able to control all the world's trade so far as the enemy was concerned, and thus two vast empires were lost as markets to neutrals. There are, however, certain reservations which must be made in the

acceptance of such a statement. The markets of all neutrals were not cut off. Those whose territory adjoined Germany and Austria-Hungary were as favourably situated as ever for trade with them. Further, until the German Government began to control all the food distribution, not all markets were closed to any neutral. Certain commodities found their way as much as ever into the hands of Germany and Austria. And, finally, the number of commodities the sale of which was admittedly restricted was really reduced to the smallest limits by subterfuge. These commodities were shipped to neutral countries contiguous to Germany and Austria-Hungary, whither they eventually found their way. The enhanced prices gained for such things in effect constituted the neutral traders distinct beneficiaries from the war.

There is one other factor which minimised if it did not wholly remove the hardship suffered by neutral traders. The Allied Powers were driven to consume huge quantities of various commodities which neutrals were able to supply. Even if the markets of Germany and Austria-Hungary had been cut off altogether, it is difficult to think that neutrals with access to British markets would have lost anything by the war, since the wants of the Allies were so vastly increased. Even food was consumed in enormously increased quantities, and particularly meat. Soldiers are well fed nowadays, and the huge armies in the field made vast demands upon the commissariat. The legitimate grievances of neutrals were not, therefore, so large as at first sight appeared; and, not to put too fine a point upon it, those which suffered from the Allied system alone really did extremely well.

British "navalism," therefore, as a matter of fact, while of necessity it curtailed the liberties of neutrals to some extent, did not inflict any real hardship upon them. No one considered he had a valid objection against the Germans because he could not visit Ypres with perfect safety any more than he did when they prevented him entering Paris in 1870. Yet accepted sea law gives a successful navy certain powers the exercise of which involved friction with neutrals, and gave the Germans their cue for the agitation they sought to raise in the United States against British navalism. The agitation was based on a *tu quoque* argument, which Germany was at pains to press into service on numerous occasions. The British said they were fighting against Prussian militarism, which, they contended, was a great menace to the peace, liberty, and rights of other nations, while their own navalism was just as great a threat to all three. Such was, in effect, the German line of argument. How far the contention was just depends upon how Great Britain used her naval supremacy, how far she infringed accepted law and custom.

The oldest naval law admits the right to seize the known property of a belligerent wherever it shall be found, and whether it be of public or private ownership. This obviously involves the right of search, which is an invasion of neutral territory when carried out on neutral ships. A neutral ship is not liable to seizure itself; but if its cargo belong to a belligerent, that can be seized. Neutral cargo in a ship owned by a belligerent is not liable to seizure, though the ship is. These are the most fundamental rights of naval war. Weaker naval powers in 1780 set up a naval code of rules which struck at the right of search; but the code was never accepted or even countenanced by the United Kingdom. It had sought to establish a rule which, in a way, circumscribed the war to belligerents, by maintaining that a neutral flag rendered all freight sailing under it immune. On the other hand, a belligerent flag made all freight carried under it liable to seizure.



The Declaration of Paris instituted a compromise between the two codes, and it was accepted by Great Britain. By the acceptance of this code Great Britain ceded her right to capture enemy property carried under a neutral flag, while her own procedure in the case of neutral property sailing under a belligerent flag was maintained. This was to tie the hands of the great naval Powers. A sop was given to them by the abolition of privateering; and there was a clause which has been of pointed application during the war. It was declared that, to be legal a blockade must be effective. The meaning of this declaration is that, since by declaring a blockade a belligerent directly restricts the liberty of neutrals, such an imposition must be strictly limited in its application to the territory over which a navy is competent to exercise a continuous watch. The sacrifice of power which Great Britain made by agreeing to the Declaration of Paris is almost unique in the history of the world. No other nation with an offensive machine so obviously and unquestionably superior to that of its neighbours has ever before agreed to limit so strictly the use of its machine. And the Declaration has been the subject of heated controversy until to-day. The morality of the rights of belligerents which it admitted, as well as the modifications of those rights, the effects of such admissions or limitations, were all the subjects of constant dispute by publicists and lawyers; and there has never been any possibility of following the lines of party divisions between the critics, although part of the foundation of the controversy was a differing theory of the State.

Six years ago a new Declaration as to the laws and customs governing naval war was made in London, and the code goes by the name of the Declaration of London. If there was controversy over the Declaration of Paris, it was a thousandfold greater over the Declaration of London, which never gained the approval of Parliament. But this was apt to be overlooked, and too much importance was attached to the fact that the British delegates had accepted it. The effect of the Declaration of London was to place all island Powers at a grave disadvantage as compared with continental Powers, since it forbade the seizure of food if it were consigned under a neutral flag to a neutral port, or unless, when consigned to the enemy ports, it could be shown that the food was destined for the armed forces or the administration. No one, after the experience of the present war, can doubt what would have been the fate of Great Britain if the German navy had been supreme. And if the Declaration of London had been accepted, any Continental nation could always import food, even for her armed forces, by ordering it through a neutral port.

The Declaration of London established a distinction between the imports of a country, dividing them into free, contraband, and conditional contraband, and thereby recognising the right of search. The free list included the raw material for textile industries, and the substratum of all modern propellent explosives, *cotton*. The Declaration allowed no interference with neutrals when trading with such commodities, except in case of blockade. Contraband included any articles, destined for a belligerent country, which were wholly or mainly used for war. No flag could ensure immunity for such goods. The list of conditional contraband—which, oddly enough, omitted the most important of all, *cotton*—included commodities which might be applied to peaceful or warlike uses. Food, for example, might be for the use of the armed forces or for the non-combatants; clothing was in the same category, and the raw materials for about two-thirds of a country's manufactures. These articles might either be free or liable to capture according to certain definite

rules, which are comprised in Articles 33–36 of the Declaration. These run as follows :—

“ 33. Conditional contraband is liable to capture if it is shown to be destined for the use of the armed forces or of a Government department of the enemy State, unless in this latter case the circumstances show that the goods cannot in fact be used for the purpose of the war in progress. . . .

“ 34. The destination referred to in Article 33, is presumed to exist if the goods are consigned to enemy authorities, or to a contractor established in the enemy country, who, as a matter of common knowledge, supplies articles of this kind to the enemy. A similar presumption arises if the goods are consigned to a fortified place belonging to the enemy, or other place serving as a base for the armed forces of the enemy. No such presumption, however, arises in the case of a merchant vessel bound for one of these places, if it is sought to prove that she herself is contraband.

“ In cases where the above presumptions do not arise the destination is presumed to be innocent.

“ The presumptions set up by this article may be rebutted.

“ 35. Conditional contraband is not liable to capture except when found on board a vessel bound for territory belonging to or occupied by the enemy, or for the armed forces of the enemy, and when it is not to be discharged in an intervening neutral port.

“ The ship's papers are conclusive proof both as to the voyage on which the vessel is engaged, and as to the port of discharge of the goods, unless she is found clearly out of the course indicated by her papers, and unable to give adequate reasons to justify such deviation.

“ 36. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 35, conditional contraband, if shown to have the destination referred to in Article 33, is liable to capture in cases where the enemy country has no seaboard.”

These clauses are of such a far-reaching character as to justify the summary given above that they render immune even food consigned to the enemy army, if it be shipped under a neutral flag to a neutral port. They thus rob a powerful navy of part of its effective force, and, at the same time, they inflict a corresponding hardship—circumstances might make it critical—upon an island sea Power. Having no contiguous neighbours, under no circumstances could food shipped to her armed forces be other than liable to seizure. The clauses would almost certainly be interpreted as permitting a strangling of the whole nation in time of war. For Great Britain, depending as she must do, upon imports for her life, and unable to live without huge imports for more than a very short space, these clauses were either suicidal or they were only signed by those who felt—as no wise statesman has ever been justified in feeling—that Great Britain would never be assailed by a navy or combination of navies sufficient to put them into practice. The Declaration of London was, it should in fairness be said, a further bait for a *rapprochement* with Germany, whose position was that of the jealous lover : Give me this or that and I'll believe you. The Declaration was a virtual abandonment of the greater part of the offensive power which Great Britain held in the possession of a powerful navy. Virtually, it would have restricted our offensive to interfering with the carrying



trade of an enemy, and this is a result so trivial as to be in no sense commensurate with the sacrifices the upkeep of so large a navy involves. The Declaration of Paris had checked, but that of London curtailed the offensive of a naval Power.

The Allies were in a peculiar position with regard to the war at sea at the outbreak of hostilities. Although the Declaration of London had not been ratified by Parliament it had been signed by the Allied signatories, and it placed their countries in the position of one who, like Germany, rides roughshod over agreements directly these cease to be profitable and directly they become obligations. Great Britain, which possessed the largest navy and possessed little else that it could at once throw into the common stock for use against the enemy, was the most nearly concerned by the limits within which sea-power might be used. At the outbreak of the war, therefore, she declared by an Order in Council what rules she and France should be guided by in her conduct of the war at sea. By this Order the Declaration of London was admitted with the exception of Article 35. That, at any rate, is the gist of the code, restricted here and extended there, which was accepted as law. Conditional contraband was made, if it fell under the ban of Article 33, liable to capture wherever it was found. This, of course, extended the right and *duty of search*, an operation which has ever been the source of friction with neutrals. Moreover, it placed a great burden upon the neutrality of places like Holland and Denmark, which are normally among the most important, if subsidiary, channels by which imports reach Germany.

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In the presence of real hardships it is remarkable that the only trouble with neutrals the Allies have had arose between Great Britain and the United States, who have been traditional opponents of the British interpretation of sea law. They were among the signatories of the Code of the Armed Neutrality in 1780, and the last war between the two countries arose out of the same difference of opinion. It is remarkable, since the United States, which is as interested as any one in the inviolability of international obligations, had found no reason to protest against the violation of Belgian neutrality nor the German defiance of the spirit, if not the letter, of the Hague Convention. It seemed extremely odd to students of the larger issues of the war that the United States could find no voice to express her repudiation of such actions, but could make theoretically, and—as Sir Edward Grey's reply showed—unjustifiable complaints against Great Britain, who was clearly making every effort to lessen the hardship the exercise of her naval power inflicted upon neutrals.

During the early part of the war several conversations had taken place between the two Governments, and on 29th December the United States sent a Note to Great Britain, insisting on "an early improvement of the treatment of American commerce by the British fleet." The Note made that demand, though it was couched in friendly terms, and professed to speak with the utmost candour, in order that the traditional friendly relations existing between the two countries might be preserved. Definite complaints were made. The Note attributed the trade depression in the United States largely to the practice of the right of search, and to the subsequent detention, which made exporters loath to take the risk of exporting at all. A further complaint was that American ships were frequently detained on mere suspicion. This was clearly of the utmost importance, and if difficulties were made about this practice, the whole force of naval pressure might be frittered away. Finally, the Note protested against the Order in Council sweeping away

the distinction between conditional contraband travelling in neutral vessels to neutral ports and the same articles sailing to enemy ports, the distinction which Article 35 of the Declaration of London enshrined.

The reply of Sir Edward Grey was as friendly in tone and conciliatory in statement as the United States Note; and its candour and courageous frankness gave great pleasure to the British public. It opened by a careful examination of American trade statistics, which showed that the depression complained of was more imaginary than real. The reply then proceeded to expound naval law in its relations to modern conditions. Sir Edward pointed out that, whereas it had been impracticable a century ago for a belligerent to obtain supplies of sea-borne goods through a neighbouring country, the advent of better systems of transport, the widely extended railway systems, have "made it as easy for a belligerent to supply himself through the ports of a neutral contiguous country as through his own." This has rendered it impossible for a belligerent "to refrain from interfering with commerce intended for the enemy merely because it is on its way to a neutral port," since "no man in these days will dispute the general proposition that a belligerent is entitled to capture contraband goods on their way to the enemy." Sir Edward proceeded to point out how the United States itself had acted in this regard.

"No better instance of the necessity of countering new devices for dispatching contraband goods to an enemy by new methods of applying the fundamental principle of the right to capture such contraband can be given than the steps which the Government of the United States found it necessary to take during the American Civil War. It was at that time that the doctrine of continuous voyage was first applied to the capture of contraband; that is to say, it was then, for the first time, that a belligerent found himself obliged to capture contraband goods on their way to the enemy, even though at the time of capture they were *en route* for a neutral port, from which they were intended subsequently to continue their journey.

"The policy then followed by the United States Government was not inconsistent with the general principles already sanctioned by international law, and met with no protest from His Majesty's Government, though it was upon British cargoes and upon British ships that the losses and the inconvenience due to this new development of the application of the old rule of international law principally fell. . . . The facilities which the introduction of steamers and railways have given to a belligerent to introduce contraband goods through neutral ports have imposed upon his opponents the additional difficulty, when endeavouring to intercept such trade, of distinguishing between goods which are really destined for the commerce of that neutral country and the goods which are on their way to the enemy."

The assumption underlying the whole of Sir Edward's Grey's skilful exposition is that what is true of contraband is true also, with the necessary reservations, of conditional contraband. The most prolific cause of friction with neutrals was the latter. A further point made by Sir Edward Grey causes one to wonder how Great Britain could ever have allowed her representatives to sign the Declaration of London. Sir Edward pointed out that in nations so highly organised for war as Germany, "there is no clear division between those whom the Government is responsible for feeding and those whom it is not," and that "the reason for drawing a distinction between foodstuffs intended for the civil population and those for the armed forces disappears when the distinction between the civil population and the armed force itself disappears." How then, one may ask, could Articles 33, 34, 35, and 36 have



been signed ? This remark of Sir Edward is, in fact, extremely far-reaching ; and if he could logically and dispassionately make it, how can one blame the German Government from acting as though the distinction did not exist ? Indeed, not only the Declaration of London, but the Hague Convention, becomes largely ineffective if a State is organised so highly as that of Germany. Where, for instance, could one find a town of any size, even in Great Britain, which during the war had not its complement of soldiers, and was thereby technically defended ? "National Service" logically does away with the distinction between combatants and non-combatants.

Sir Edward Grey's point was promptly emphasised by the official announcement that the German Government was to assume control of all importation of grain and flour. In taking formal notice of this decision the British Foreign Office stated that it created "a novel situation." In effect it may be said to have made a present to Great Britain of all that the Declaration of London had withdrawn, for it specifically abolished the distinction between foodstuffs intended for the civil population and for the armed forces. The odd thing is that it seems to have been completely unnecessary. It is possible that some hardship might have been felt, and the food supply might not have lasted so well if the step had not been taken ; but it does not seem probable. Perhaps the reason is to be found in the desire of the German Admiralty to injure England, and the irksomeness of the fact that by existing conventions they had not the power. On several occasions, when the Germans were about to act contrary to law and custom, their intention was made known to the world by German announcements that the Allies had been guilty of such infringements, and that they would be compelled to act in a similar manner as a measure of reprisal. It is quite possible that the German announcement as to the taking over of the food imports was meant to prepare the way for her submarine blockade. This had, in fact, been pleaded in an interview granted by Admiral von Tirpitz at the beginning of December. The founder of the modern German navy had suggested that Germany might resort to a submarine blockade. "Why not ? England wants to starve us ?" It is true that, in officially announcing the blockade, Germany did not mention this fact ; but her apologists did, and there is no doubt that the spectacle of a starving Germany did much to excuse the novel situation which the proclamation created.

On 24th January the German fleet made its last venture into the open for many months. Once or twice the German Admiralty arranged a careful outing, and called upon the world to admire it ; but no one was deceived for a moment into thinking that the British fleet had relaxed its hold or that it would not repeat the operation of 24th January if the smallest opportunity were given it. Two days before this significant action the German navy had been showing its prowess in the only way of which she seemed master in the war—by attacking a ship which could not hit back. The British merchant vessel *Durward* was sunk by a submarine off Maas lightship, and the crew were saved. On 30th January another German submarine sank three British steamers off the Lancashire coast. The crew of one were lost. These facts : the inability of the German fleet to keep the sea, the defencelessness of merchantmen in face of the submarines, and the capacity of the latter for long voyages, were steps towards the action of 4th February.

On that day the German Government issued a proclamation constituting a submarine blockade of the British Isles. The waters round these islands, with the

exception of a belt round the Shetland Islands, along the east shores of the North Sea, and for thirty miles along the coast of Holland, were proclaimed a military area from 18th February. From that date "every hostile merchant ship in these waters will be destroyed, even though the lives of crews and passengers should thereby be endangered." Neutrals were warned that they could not enter the area without danger. The proclamation gave great satisfaction in Germany, where it was felt that at last the navy was about to do something. Flamboyant accounts of what would happen were given by several German papers, and the fact was apparently completely ignored that Great Britain had for six months preserved intact its lines of communication with the army in France in spite of the presence of German submarines in the Channel.

A memorandum was issued explaining the reasons which had driven Germany to embark on this course, which was one of brutal murder. One section was devoted to explaining why merchantmen should be subject to attack other than that recognised by international law and established custom, and another expounded the case for treating neutrals in the same way. The reasons for taking the unprecedented action against merchantmen were: the comprehensiveness of the British list of contraband, which included articles which only most indirectly were useful for military purposes, the abolition of the distinction between absolute and conditional contraband, the removal from neutral ships of German reservists of military age, the British proclamation declaring the whole North Sea a military area. This last was a reason which could only have been urged disingenuously. It was an action directly necessitated by the extraordinary and inhumane use of mines in that area by the German Admiralty. The policy of the British Government with regard to two of the other reasons was certainly vacillating; but it was not illegal or inequitable. The abolition of the distinction between conditional and absolute contraband has already been discussed. To regard such frivolous and disingenuous pretexts as justifying a course of action such as that now announced was consistent with what we know of Germany since the outbreak of the war; but it is hardly what is expected of a civilised nation in the twentieth century.

The case for including neutrals in the risks they were about to sow so widely was somewhat similar to the argument already given in this chapter against the action of the United States in presenting a Note to Great Britain calling for a change in her treatment of American shipping; they had not lodged any effective protest against the breaches of international law by Great Britain. The memorandum quoted the following case of infringement of international law: the British Government had seized German individuals and property. That is all, and no attempt was made to state how the procedure was contrary to international law. The memorandum proceeded to charge neutrals with failure to preserve neutrality:—

"They had also copied British measures, which are irreconcilable with the freedom of the sea, in that they have, obviously under the pressure of England, hindered by export and transit embargoes the transit of wares for peaceful purposes to Germany. The German Government has in vain called the attention of neutral Powers to the fact that it must face the question of whether it can any longer persevere in its hitherto strict observance of the rules of the London Declaration if Great Britain were to continue its course and the neutral Powers to acquiesce in these violations of neutrality to the detriment of Germany. For her violations of international law Great Britain pleads the vital interests which the British Empire has



at stake, and the neutral Powers seem to satisfy themselves with theoretical protests."

Is not this last clause the Allies' indictment of Germany? It was Germany which pleaded necessity and vital interest for marching through Belgium and Luxemburg; and even American citizens charged their own Government, not with satisfying itself "with theoretical protests," but with failing even to raise any protest. The argument is a most clumsy application of the *tu quoque* principle. The Germans wished to be untrammelled by law; they, therefore, charged the Allies with having broken international law. Some colour was given to this charge by the British position at the outbreak of the war, its signature being affixed to the Declaration of London, but without the only ratification which could give it force. Germany had a valid charge against the Allies that they chose the code by which they would be bound. It was not necessary for Germany to account herself similarly bound by the same code. But Germany's charge of breaches of international law—presumably she meant the Declaration of London, which placed her in as advantageous a position as it placed Great Britain at a disadvantage—was formulated in order to claim for her, not a wider, fairer, or more humane code of laws, but complete freedom to do what she would without reference to anything but blind hate and desire to injure. As the memorandum continued: "Therefore, in fact, they accept the vital interests of belligerents as sufficient excuse for every method of warfare. Germany must now appeal to those same vital interests."

"Every method of warfare." Germany, it might have been thought, had already acted according to this rule. But there remained one thing which she had not yet done. She had murdered non-combatants wholesale in Belgium; but they, at least, had been tactless enough to belong to the same town or district where some one had, perhaps, allowed his anger to get the better of his foresight and will, and had shot a German soldier. She wished now to murder any one who dared approach his native country across the sea; any one, native or neutral, who dared to be anywhere near Great Britain. This warfare by submarine at once did away with the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, Germany's argument being, in effect, that because Great Britain had abolished the distinction between absolute and conditional contraband, because she made both classes of articles liable to capture, Germany could *kill* any one, combatant or non-combatant, found upon the sea, so far as she could range. No special pleading will invalidate the generalisation that the British naval supremacy had consistently been exercised in a humane manner. The power to search consistently claimed was, in effect, an insistence on the right to *judge*. Even captures at sea were subject to judgment, and had to be taken into port for the purpose. Clearly it was easier for Great Britain to observe this rule with her huge Empire all over the world. But the British procedure had been that where a prize could not be taken into port for trial it should be allowed to go. The presence of enemy warships between the British cruiser and her nearest port was held, if they could not be evaded, a sufficient argument for allowing the capture to go to ensure their own safety. Navies with smaller empires would naturally be compelled to do this at least ten times as often as Great Britain, and the Declaration of London, which was the Magna Charta of small navies, recognised this by allowing a cruiser to sink a prize if it could not be taken into port without endangering the warship's liberty or the success of its operations. But this permission assumed that the safety of the crew had been provided for.

Ships like the *Emden* scrupulously observed all the restrictions which their isolated condition necessitated. At the same time the *Emden* used every lawful stratagem of war. She steamed into Penang harbour under the Japanese flag, and was thus able to get near enough to destroy two ships. It was this perfectly lawful stratagem which, by a blunder of the Admiralty, gave the Germans the best of excuses for including a warning to neutrals as to entering the proclaimed area. If the submarines could be forced to search the danger would be practically killed. The Admiralty circulated instructions to British merchantmen to use neutral flags. This move would force submarines either to allow numbers of vessels to slip through their hands or to execute a search. The German Admiralty contrived to get wind of these instructions, and at once deduced from them the conclusion which was most suited to their point of view. As they could not search, neutrals would share the same danger as the British, and, the Germans were careful to emphasise the fact, this was due to the British Admiralty instructions. The Foreign Office issued a justification of the practice, but when the *Lusitania* actually steamed into Liverpool under the American flag, the United States' Government made a protest. This was strictly justified. Nothing can make the *practice* of using a false flag lawful, while, of course, on occasion it is perfectly justifiable to resort to the stratagem.

The American protest to the German proclamation was inevitably much concerned with this particular view of the case. "The suspicion that enemy ships were using a neutral flag improperly can create no just presumption that all ships traversing the proscribed area are subject to the same suspicion. It is to determine exactly these questions that this Government understood the right to visit and search to have been recognised.

"If the commanders of German vessels of war should act upon the presumption that the flag of the United States is not being used in good faith, and should destroy on the high seas American vessels or the lives of American citizens, it would be difficult for the Government of the United States to view the act in any other light than an indefensible violation of neutral rights, which it would be very hard indeed to reconcile with the friendly relations now so happily subsisting between the two Governments. If such a deplorable situation should arise, the Imperial German Government can readily appreciate that the Government of the United States would be constrained to hold the Imperial Government to a strict accountability for such acts of their naval authorities, to take any steps which might be necessary to safeguard American lives and property, and to secure to American citizens the full enjoyment of their acknowledged rights on the high seas."

A certain sternness of tone about this last clause, the insistence that Germany would be held to "strict accountability," is the only point which one can discover as differentiating the protests which the United States addressed to Great Britain and Germany, though the former was only with reference to some slight delay in the forwarding of American goods and the latter had reference to an open threat against American lives. As the American "Press" said much later: "Because the Government had to write Notes of protest to Berlin it must, to show impartiality, write Notes of protest to Downing Street. Because we had a genuine grievance, in fact, frightful grievances, against von Tirpitz's submarines, we must manufacture spurious grievances against the British prize courts." That, at any rate, was an outspoken American point of view, and it certainly emphasised the fact that, while there could



be no parity between the grievances, while Great Britain showed herself most conciliatory on all occasions and claimed no further rights than had been exercised by America herself in the Civil War, and Germany showed herself defiant, careless of all restrictions, and disposed to act in a manner which the United States Government herself described as "so unprecedented in naval warfare," it was strange that the United States addressed each Government in much the same tone.

When the actual cases were provided by Germany the United States replied with more words. First an American citizen, then an American ship went down. Finally, there came the terrible case of the *Lusitania*. The Cunard liner, *Lusitania*, which, from its speed and the sumptuousness of its appointments had been almost as much an object of pride in New York as in Liverpool, was sunk on 7th May off the Old Head of Kinsale, near Queenstown, with the loss of over 1,300 lives, many being those of American citizens. Before the liner left New York a warning had been circulated by the German Embassy that the vessel would be sunk; but passengers no doubt felt that either the threat was not serious, or that, if it were, at any rate the British navy could be trusted to see to the safety of the ship. Apparently the submarine\* lay in wait for the *Lusitania*, which was steaming on its usual course at 18 knots, three-quarters of its usual speed. No warning was given, and the huge liner went down in a few minutes. A thrill of horror went over the world, except in Germany, where a medal was struck to commemorate the heroic deed. There followed more protests. Germany replied, and so on. The American desire to keep out of trouble and the laudable desire of the Administration to avoid even the shows of partiality, led the President to tolerate a treatment which no other country which called itself a Power would have borne for a minute. President Wilson had special difficulties to contend with. The United States is a series of nations in the melting-pot; and Mr. Wilson may have considered that he had not yet the whole of his people behind him in making a more effective protest. There is a large German population, which was astutely stirred during the war by German agents, and was certainly at that time a great bar to any concerted action against Germany.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* may have been planned in order to convince the German public of the reality of the blockade, for the first six months had only yielded thirty-one British vessels out of 8,960 of all nationalities entering and leaving British ports. Some of these, like the *Falaba*, were sunk with an exaggeration of cruelty which is almost unimaginable. The submarine is said to have stood by, and the German sailors to have laughed and jeered at the drowning people. On the other hand, the commanders of some submarines acted with courtesy and provided for the safety of the passengers and crew. A number of German submarines were sunk by British warships and war contrivances, and one was rammed by the s.s. *Thordis*, a steamer of probably little more than half the tonnage of the submarine. The "blockade"† was not sufficiently fruitful to modify the commerce of British ports. Vessels soon learned how to protect themselves against submarines, and the seas, policed by innumerable craft of all sorts, were little more dangerous after than before the proclamation of the blockade.

The British reply to the submarine blockade was carefully considered. It was made, of course, before any one could say to what extent the menace would prove

\* The submarine U20 was lost off the Danish coast in November 1916, and its commander, Kapitänlt. Schwieger, was drowned with his crew in U38 in September 1917.

† It was not a legal blockade, since it was not and could not then be effective.

a real danger. Mr. Asquith's statement of the Government's decision was succinct enough. In retaliation for the German violations of international law the Allies had determined that no commodities of any sort should in future be allowed to enter or leave Germany. Even in the slightly modified form in which the decision saw the light of day as an Order in Council, it is unfortunate that it was inevitably a course which must cause further friction with neutrals. The decision applied to vessels leaving port after March 1, 1915, and the slight loophole for accommodation was given by the wording of Clause 3: "Every merchant vessel which sailed from her port of departure after March 1, 1915, on her way to a port other than a German port, carrying goods with an enemy destination, or which are enemy property, may be required to discharge such goods in a British or Allied port." The first two clauses stated that no vessel "shall be allowed to proceed" to a German port, or "shall be allowed to proceed" from a German port after 1st March. The word "may" in Clause 3 marks a less uncompromising attitude. The effect of the Order was to establish a blockade, though it was not so proclaimed, since, as the Prime Minister had said, Great Britain did not intend her action to be strangled in a network of judicial niceties, by which a doubtful case might be able to slip through the machinery of a Prize Court. At the same time this seemingly high-handed proceeding substituted a more lenient treatment for the normal penalty of confiscation imposed on breach of blockade. The machinery of the blockade was a cruiser cordon.

Before this Order had been decided upon, there had been evidence of a tendency to bargain; but this was never possible from the British standpoint. No bargain was possible under threat of murder. The offers were made that the submarine attacks on merchantmen and the laying of drifting mines should cease on Britain agreeing to place no restrictions on the importation of food for the German civil population. This was proposed by the United States; and the German Ambassador there, Count Bernsdorff, had made a similar proposal, suggesting that foodstuffs should be allowed to pass through German ports for the civil population. Until the *Wilhelmina* arrived at Falmouth on 9th February with foodstuffs consigned to Germany, Great Britain had not interfered with neutral ships carrying foodstuffs for the civil population of Germany. The *Wilhelmina*, as a matter of fact, put into port of her own accord and for her own convenience. How much more liberty than had been hitherto allowed the Germans required, in consideration of their ceasing to attack merchantmen by submarines, it is difficult to say. Until the official German declaration of Government control of foodstuffs, the idea of interfering with any neutral ship carrying food to the civil population had not arisen; and this, in spite of the fact, that the *Emden* had sunk foodships on their way to England. The question arose, how could the distinction be maintained in face of the German control of all foodstuffs. It seems probable that they were attempting to raise a lawful blockade\* by threat of one which was not only unlawful but absolutely inhumane. There is a further consideration already noted, that it is possible there was never any real scarcity of food—though, undoubtedly, the bread supply was doled out and limited—and that it was a mere excuse to cover an unlawful naval war from which the German Admiralty expected great results. And, in any case, a bargain, under

\* It is necessary to remember that the submarine "blockade," aiming at the starvation of England by sinking all vessels, including foodships, was announced on 4th February, and the counter-blockade only in the next month. "Who began the starvation war?" is therefore clear.



the circumstances, was a species of blackmail, which one could not discuss with dignity or, perhaps, with safety.

In face of the German action, and of the most obvious intention to make every consideration for neutrals in applying the new blockade, it was surely unnecessary for the United States to issue another protest. Yet that is what she did, objecting chiefly to the prohibition of trade with Germany through neutral territory. But the objection was not acrimonious and, although further controversy followed, it was more or less discounted by such actions as the sinking of the *Lusitania*. In the controversy which followed that crime there was again a disposition to bargain, using the fact as a lever to prevent the United States selling arms or ammunition to the Allies. Mr. Bryan was quick to point out, in reply to a charge that this was a breach of neutrality, that the American markets were open to the world, and that Germany as well as the Allies could buy if she made arrangements to remove the goods. There is, in fact, a certain amount of evidence that arms and ammunition found their way into Germany during the war. Of this one may be reasonably sure and no partiality impair its justice. If Germany had been in the position of Britain, neutrals would have had far less consideration, and Britain, it goes without saying, none.

One other cause of friction in the application of sea law had arisen between the United States and the Allies. There lay in American harbours a large number of German-owned steamships. The question was mooted, and became the subject of a bill whether these could not be acquired by the United States and used as the nucleus of an increased mercantile marine. The bill never became law. There was much controversy about it in the United States, one famous publicist going so far as to say, that if the bill did become law the Allies would be perfectly justified in considering it a *casus belli*. One thing was perfectly clear—the purchase money would be tantamount to a magnificent present to the Germanic Powers, since their power of purchase abroad was certainly not inexhaustible. International law on the subject of transfer of property during the war to avoid danger of capture and confiscation is ambiguous. Certainly it would have been a difficult case if the point had reached the British Courts. A sort of test case was arranged, not by the Government, but by interested persons in America. The *Dacia*, a Hamburg-America liner, was bought from the company by a Mr. E. Breitung, an American subject, of German ancestry. It was loaded with cotton at Galveston, and sailed for Rotterdam on 31st January. Now, cotton was neither contraband nor conditional contraband, and hence the cargo could not be stopped; neither could the ship, if it were legally American. The *Dacia* hung about the American coasts for some time, endeavours being made to get the Government to insure the boat; but at last, on 11th February, it sailed from Norfolk, Virginia. The case aroused much interest, and it was not clear what the decision of the British Courts would be. Fortunately, the solution of the difficulty proved extremely simple. On 27th February a French cruiser stopped the *Dacia* in the Channel and took her into Brest. The French law is unambiguous on the subject, and recognises no transfer after the outbreak of war.

Yet all these minor controversies were dwarfed by the great fact that the evolution of the submarine had introduced a new element into warfare at sea. The submarine entered the war with its possibilities largely a matter of guesswork. It was prophesied that it would put the Dreadnought out of date; it was prophesied that it would be of no use whatever. The first months of the war proved that it had most

definite uses, and proved that warships were only safe so long as they were moving. Oddly enough, the submarine blockade, which should have revealed the full capacities of the submarine, since for the first time it was set to sink anything it could find, showed rather how vulnerable it really is, and how narrow are its limits of dangerous action. When it is remembered that for months transports were constantly on their way to France and the East, numbers of vessels were used as feeders to the armies, the usual volume of commerce was on the seas, and a constant stream of warships; when it is remembered that an effective blockade was maintained against Germany, which meant that cruisers must keep the seas—and against these facts is placed the small success of the submarines, it can be said that, except in large numbers, they have not justified their existence.

In narrow waters, such as the Sea of Marmora, it is true, the British submarine caused very great damage; but the Turkish transports had not the skilful shepherding given to the British. Something too must be put down to the personnel of the submarine. A submarine officer and crew require longer training than the crew of a larger unit; and Germany may have been attempting the impossible in trying to equip vast numbers of these vessels during the early part of the war. A very great proportion must have been lost. The loss of several was announced, but many more were sunk, and this drainage of their best material was difficult for the German Admiralty to cope with.

On 8th March the British Admiralty announced that they were to segregate the officers and men taken prisoner from U8, which had been sunk. The separate treatment was meant to mark the British opinion that the submarine blockade was not lawful warfare. Many serious people felt at the time that, even as a question of expediency, it is a false move to attempt reprisals with a foe like Germany. The Germans retorted by taking the same number of British *officers*—they seem to have been especially selected from the crack regiments—and subjecting them to solitary confinement. When Mr. Balfour went to the Admiralty he took the first opportunity of doing away with the distinctive treatment, and the British officers were restored to the ordinary treatment by Germany. It is a safer, if vaguer, thing to state that “those responsible” will be held “strictly accountable” for these barbarities after the war. This means, no doubt, much the same as the earlier American protests against the German submarine blockade—that is to say, nothing; but it sounds well, and it gives no loophole to the decivilised to gratify an instinct for cruelty.

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But with the Allied blockade the *siege* of Germany began; and this fact differentiates the first phase of the war from that which now began. A siege is the reduction of a military area, either by defeat of the force which defends it, or by starving the force into submission. The extent of the besieged area does not alter the essential elements of siege; and though all war is a *moral* struggle and defeat a submission of will, it is starvation or its approach which eats the heart out of a defence that is otherwise successful. Every siege implies *positional* warfare and some sort of fortification, whether this be by those long and elaborate trench lines which were already in evidence on the Western front, or by the more historic and now largely obsolete line of forts. Positional warfare began with the Allied success in Flanders in the October and November battles; but there was no true siege until the British declared the blockade in March. It was not and could not be complete until, with





The Siege War.

the accession of the United States to the cause of the Allies, the rationing of neutrals became possible. A siege, of necessity, implies a war of *attrition*, and this wearing-down process was gradually applied to all the elements of the force of Germany.

Under the pressure of the siege the Germanic Powers, and contiguous neutrals who attempted to supply them, began to consume the floating balance of the commodities ordinarily necessary to the support of modern civilised life, and, later on, came to live on the verge of starvation. Though people outside Germany could only see her state through the fog of her inspired reports, she began to experience the horrors of siege. Only when the armistice was at length signed, through the failure of the German armies, could the world appreciate how relentlessly the pressure of the siege had made itself felt.

The war from this time forth falls into eight well-marked pulses, as the Germans attempted to break the siege or the Allies to defeat the defensive force, in order that the siege might not become too protracted and the war end in a negotiated peace by the exhaustion of both sides. The first of these pulses was the attempt to break out on the East, which led to the great Russian Retreat, and had its ultimate effect in the political and moral spheres, with the final collapse of Russia in 1917. The second was the first Allied attempt to break in the outer siege lines by the converging attack from Champagne and about Loos, which yielded only local and tactical successes. The third was the second great attempt to break out on the West via Verdun, and this prolonged struggle left the advantage to the Allies, who suffered less and did not yield even the name that, in the end, would have satisfied the German Staff. The fourth was the British and French blow at the German positions on the Somme, and this again failed of strategical success, though it produced such a crisis in Germany's man power that a peace offer was made, and the Germans fell back on shorter and stronger lines in the following spring. The fifth was the Allied offensive campaign of the Ridges. The spring and summer of 1917 were occupied by these battles; and if Russia had not ceased to count as a fighting power, by this time the Allies would probably have defeated the Germans in the West. Russia's defection did not break the siege, except in so far as it gave Germany new sources of oil and rubber. Cotton and food it could not give. Its chief effect was to release forces for the Western and South-Western fronts, and hence the sixth pulse was the sortie into Venetia. This also failed of its major effect, as did also the seventh, the attempt to break out on the main Western front, by Ludendorff's offensive in the spring and summer of 1918. This deadly thrust was parried, the sortie thrown back, and the eighth pulse was that brief campaign of Marshal Foch, which, three days after its inception, caused Ludendorff to insist that the German Chancellor should immediately open negotiations for peace.

The eight books of Part III. are devoted to these great movements upon which other operations were imposed, but without changing their supreme value.

## II. THE RECOVERY OF NEUVE CHAPELLE.

THE first movement which marked the siege war formed part of the greatest campaign which the history of war records. Hindenburg's attempt to deal decisively with Russia was logically an attempt to make a sortie from the siege lines which



penned in the Central Empires on land and sea. It became a unique campaign. For five months great battles were fought, and the military force immediately available for Russian needs was dissipated more and more as that tense struggle developed. But at the end no sortie had been achieved on the East; and though in the next phase the Germanic Allies secured their "golden corridor" to the East, the besieged empires were in no wise relieved. In linking up their territory with that of Turkey they received an accession of strength; but their gains did not exceed their liabilities.

These terrible battles on the Eastern front did not, however, wholly fill the picture which the war presented during these months. There was the stained glory of the Dardanelles campaign to act as a counterpoise. If this episode had been rounded off by success instead of brilliant failure, even the Russian defeats would have mattered little. And besides this epic fighting in the Near East, there were the first Allied attempts to cope with the German military machine in the West. It is one of these we must first record.

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The war on the Western front settled down gradually after the first battle of Ypres into a warfare of positions—trench warfare. Of the trials and discomforts of that time the whole will never be told. The Allies were not prepared for it, and did not react to the emergency as quickly and thoroughly as the Germans. And this, true of all the Allies, is most true of the British. The troops were too few to provide proper reserves and reliefs. There were no spades and no picks for a long time. There was not even a sufficiency of clothing and boots. The ammunition was so low that the gunners fumed in inactivity, while the Germans smashed the trenches to bits, and endeavoured to destroy even the guns. There are stories of gallant and, at first, confident attempts to destroy the posts of German snipers with a whole two days' allowance of shell—some twelve rounds or so of *shrapnel*. But the Germans, having retired for this unwonted activity, returned happily when it was over, and began once more. There were no "duck-boards" to floor the trenches, and men sank and were lost in the watery slush to provide a gruesome carpet for their comrades. If the first phase of the war had seen the glory, the second saw the horror, the shame, and the long-drawn-out agony of the war.

Yet, so dauntless is the human spirit, that men volunteered in huge numbers for this ordeal, and it was considered feasible to project a great offensive on the Western front. This it was which had no small effect upon the staging of the initial attempt on the Dardanelles from the sea. Lord Kitchener wanted all the men he could secure for the Western front, where alone the decision could be obtained. But circumstances gradually whittled down this great offensive until it became the disjointed actions of March, April, and May. The first of these was the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, the most important and significant action in which the British had been engaged for five months. In the interval the British army had not been idle; nor had it confined itself merely to defence. But the engagement of Neuve Chapelle was, in intention, an important offensive; and even in achievement it deserved to be accounted higher than anything which the British had done since they had dug themselves into these positions in the north-west of France and south-west of Belgium. Already it had become almost natural in this country to talk of the "deadlock" in France and Belgium, and to think of the position as though it might be represented by the picture of two impregnable fortresses fronting one another. That the position was a deadlock only in the sense that merely minor changes

had taken place in the line of contact between the opposing armies, and that neither side wished at the moment to pay the cost which breaking the enemy's line entailed, was apparent to every serious student of the war. The war was not a contest of lines or positions, but of men; and the true meaning of the "break-through" \* was shown by the Eastern campaign. Numerous indications had been given that the Allies could undoubtedly break the German front, even the highly fortified front which the trench warfare had developed. None of these, however, was so significant as the capture of Neuve Chapelle, which had been lost in the early days of the fighting on this front. But it was much more significant than its actual achievement. Unfavourable weather, and still more unfavourable handling of sections of the troops, prevented the movement from being the decisive success it deserved to be; but the mistakes served to define more clearly the conditions of success.

The reasons which prompted Sir John French to assume the offensive at the time are given by him in the following words: "The general aspect of the Allied situation about Europe, and particularly the marked success of the Russian army in repelling the violent onslaughts of Marshal von Hindenburg; the apparent weakening of the enemy in my front, and the necessity for assisting our Russian Allies to the utmost by holding as many hostile troops as possible in the Western theatre; the efforts to this end which were being made by the French forces at Arras and Champagne; and, perhaps the most weighty consideration of all, the need of fostering the offensive spirit in the troops under my command after the trying and possibly enervating experiences which they had gone through of a severe winter in the trenches."

There are one or two important points in the dispatch which deserve to be emphasised. The first is that the war was looked upon as *one* campaign, and, therefore, the commanders in the East and in the West endeavoured to co-operate with one another. Clearly, all the Germans wished was to hold one side with a minimum of troops, and fling their full strength against the other. The Eastern seemed the theatre in which a decision could be most easily obtained, and hence the new German plan was to inflict a crushing blow upon the Russians and compel them to make peace. It was the duty of the Allies in the West to force the German Staff to keep in that area the maximum number of troops; just as a general, trying to turn the enemy's flank and surround him, is careful to attack on the front simultaneously with the utmost vigour to prevent the enemy drawing off men for the reinforcement of the flank. There is another point of the first importance. In the eyes of Sir John French, it is clear, the enemy seemed to be nearing the critical point. He was not weakening on one front only, but on both; and such a weakening, if it did not presage the beginning of the end, it might certainly be the herald of a retreat. Such misconceptions were common even to the end of the war.

\* The term "break through" was used in various senses, and the German Staff profited by its ambiguity to foster the spirit of their troops and people. Frequently it meant no more than the piercing of a defensive zone of greater or less extent. Thus Ludendorff admits that the Russians achieved a "break through" in Masuria in the winter of 1914, but adds that it was "merely of local importance." On other occasions it was used to describe such a piercing of the defences in one sector that a general readjustment over a greater sector was necessitated. In its largest sense it was taken to mean a decision. Thus, in the Ypres offensive of 1917 the German *communiqués* frequently stated that the British had not achieved a "break through." They actually did achieve a local break through on several occasions. The suggestion was that the offensive never achieved any success. On the other hand, when the German *communiqués* spoke of "our break through," they attempted to conjure up the picture of a decision, and pessimists in Britain persisted in stating that it was impossible to break through, meaning to secure a decision—i.e., there are no victories except final and complete victory.



One further point, which is given in another part of the dispatch, is significant. The plans had been carefully thought out some three weeks before being put into operation. "The object, nature, and scope of the attack, and instructions for the conduct of the operations were communicated by me to Sir Douglas Haig in a secret memorandum, dated 19th February." And it is also interesting to note the fact that reliefs and readjustments in the British lines had brought Sir Douglas Haig from the district above Ypres to the other end of the section held by the British. This commander, to whom the main attack was entrusted, was now in charge of the 1st Army, comprising the 1st Corps, 4th Corps, and Anglo-Indian Corps. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, now in charge of the 2nd Army, comprising the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Corps, gave support.

Sir John French expected to seize a position which would give him a good point of departure for an offensive against Lille, and would, at the same time, make the German lines at La Bassée more difficult to hold. Neuve Chapelle lies in flat country; but beyond the village the land rises to a ridge which converges upon Fournes from Haut Pommereau, south of Aubers, and from the direction of La Bassée. From Fournes the ridge runs to a point about two miles south of Lille, and commands all the flat country about the city. The village of Neuve Chapelle was encircled by a highly developed series of trenches, and it had to be taken before the ridge could be won. The 4th Army Corps (General Rawlinson) held the centre and left of the offensive, and the Indian Corps the right. In the night the men were quietly moved up into position on the small front, which was to be the theatre of the morrow's battle. Gurkhas and Garhwalis, Leicesters, Lincolns, Berks, Black Watch, and Territorials, and numbers of others quietly took their positions. Guns had been accumulated there in greater numbers than on any front of similar extent in the war. Sir John French had, a day or two before, discussed his plans with the Corps Commanders, and Sir Douglas Haig had given detailed orders to cover all emergencies.

On the morning of 10th March British guns began to boom early, and aeroplanes were seen as they observed and corrected the range. The battle was to open with a heavy bombardment of the German positions, and then would follow the advance of the infantry. The bombardment was not only to shake the *moral* and thin the numbers of the enemy, but also to break down the formidable barbed wire defences he had reared. These, covered at intervals by machine guns, constituted an almost impregnable fortress. Unbroken, nothing could make headway against them.

At 7.30 the bombardment began, and it was one of the most terrible experiences an army had ever had. The opposing trenches were in many places not eighty feet apart. The massed guns, firing at short range, flung their shells very little above the heads of the men waiting in the trenches. Lyddite fumes hung over them. The earth all around trembled and shook. Earth and dust were flung over them, sometimes mingled with human fragments. At five minutes past eight the guns changed their range, and flung their terrible burden into Neuve Chapelle. Whistles sounded, orders rang out, and the 23rd and 25th Brigades ran from the trenches towards the trenches north-west of Neuve Chapelle, while the Garhwali Brigade assaulted the German trenches south of the village. The bombardment had been so arranged that the Germans were compelled to sustain it, for behind them was a barrage of bursting shells, which forbade all retirement, either *en masse* or in small bodies. It was then on the few men left alive after such an experience that the British fell, when

the bombardment left the German trenches to pound into dust the village beyond. The centre and right wing got away first, and were most successful. The German trenches had been reduced to a broad belt of land torn about in all directions. Long lanes had been cut through it; craters had been blown out of it. The Germans remaining alive had, in the vast majority of cases, lost their nerve completely, and were too glad to surrender. Many of them stood helpless amid the debris of human bodies and war material. But there were conspicuous exceptions. Two German officers, in one place, stood alone coolly working a machine gun. They fought to the last.

The trenches in the centre and south were carried with little difficulty; but in



The Battle of Neuve Chapelle. The black line shows the general position of the British front before the battle.

the north the men of the 23rd Brigade could make little headway. In front of them the bombardment had been much less effective, and the barbed wire entanglements still stood and held them off from the trenches beyond. Here the Middlesex regiment and the Scottish Rifles sustained heavy losses, and, indeed, their losses would have been much heavier still but that the second act of the drama, carrying the British centre into the village of Neuve Chapelle turned the flank of the section of the enemy opposing the 23rd Brigade. The Garhwalis had carried the trenches on the south front and had swept past the village towards the Biez Forest. All this had taken place so rapidly that the men who were to take the village itself were drawn up waiting, while the bombardment of the village was still going on.

The advance on Neuve Chapelle began at 8.35. Here was an inferno itself.



What had once been a placid little village, saturated with the memory of the hundred small emotions and interests which make up the round of human life, was now simply a mass of ruins. A vivid report published in the *Daily Mail* stated that : " Of all that once fair village, but two things remained intact—two great crucifixes reared aloft, one in the churchyard the other over against the château. From the cross that is the emblem of our faith the figure of Christ, yet intact, though all pitted with bullet marks, looked down in mute agony on the slaying in the village."

There is, indeed, nothing in warfare to be compared to the fighting in towns and villages. It is not a battle which takes place. It is simply anarchy. Round the sides of ruined houses, from the roofless upper rooms, from windows in the front, back, and sides shots may come. Here in the ruined village the struggle was pitched in this rhythm. From all sorts of hidden burrows Germans emerged, some fighting to the last, many holding their arms up to surrender. In any place, where fair shelter remained, the enemy still plied their rifles and machine guns ; and the Rifle Brigade and Royal Irish Rifles, who had the work in hand and, indeed, carried it through, succeeded only at heavy cost. Men were taken in various places with their nerve so shattered as to be almost insane.

By 11 A.M. the whole village of Neuve Chapelle was in the hands of the British, and the main roads around. While the storming of the village had been taking place the guns, again changing their range, had dropped a terrible curtain of shrapnel beyond, so that the small area in which the conflict was taking place was completely isolated. The Germans could send no reinforcements and had to bear the onslaught of as much superior forces as they themselves had hurled against the British positions in October and November. Even now, on the extreme north of the advance, and in one spot of the south, the victory was won only at a terrible price. Deeds of reckless, stoical endurance were wrought there, when men were compelled to stand at the fence of wire, while the deadly machine guns beyond, rattled off their 660 shots per minute. In one or two places like this, which the bombardment had not sufficiently cleared, famous old regiments like the Scottish Rifles, and the newest of the new, a Territorial battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, won undying fame.

Many of these things, grim and glorious, need not have occurred, but for the impossibility of getting messages through from the front to the artillery behind. The perpetual rain of bullets cut all the wires, and communications broke down. The signalling corps, with great gallantry, went into the very thick of the fighting time after time to repair the wires ; but they were broken almost immediately again. It was only when many valuable lives had been lost that the artillery had their attention drawn to the places, here and there, where the Germans were taking such a terrible toll of the British from behind the barbed wire.

This interruption of communications was responsible for many more misfortunes before the end of the episode. One of these was the delay which elapsed before pressing on after the capture of the village. There was a gap in the German line, and with competent handling even Lille might have been won. The advance through the village had caused a great deal of disorganisation, and the small stretches of barbed wire holding up the sections in front of them, and thereby compelling other sections to fight to the right or left of their pre-arranged line of advance, had added to the inevitable confusion. It was necessary to re-form a little ; but communication between front and rear was almost impossible. According to Sir John French's

dispatch there seems to have been, at this point, a quite unnecessary element in the delay. "I am of opinion that this delay would not have occurred had the clearly expressed order of the General Officer Commanding 1st Army been more carefully observed." It is clear that the orders of Sir Douglas Haig must have been very detailed and very carefully arranged, for the opening stages of the battle went almost with the precision of a parade. There was a further, apparently avoidable, delay due to the Commander of the 4th Corps not bringing his reserve brigades into action more speedily.

As it was, the German demoralisation seemed complete, and batches of men surrendered everywhere. Yet several valuable hours were lost before the advance was resumed at 3.30. By this time the scattered enemy had been beaten up from various parts of the district, and the vital points in the approach to the Aubers Ridge were carefully defended. The enemy were still too dazed to attempt anything more than this purely defensive rôle, and the troops were able to form up unmolested to the east of the village. The 21st Brigade (7th Division) lined up without a shot on the left of the line, and advanced towards the Moulin du Pietre, until held up by fire from the buildings still standing. The 24th Brigade, farther south, found its progress barred by the defences on the bridge over the river des Layes, which cut across the line of advance towards the Aubers Ridge. The river proved too great a barrier. Artillery was brought to bear upon the bridge; but the day was rapidly drawing to a close. The Garhwali Brigade, comprising Seaforths, Jats, and Gurkhas, farther still to the south, cleared and re-cleared in magnificent charges the Bois du Biez, but could not hold it. Reinforcements were now being thrown forward to the assistance of the enemy, and nothing could be done in the darkness but make good the positions won.

While this struggle for Neuve Chapelle had been going on, the right of the 1st Corps had been playing an important and heroic rôle farther south. It was ordered to issue from Givenchy and attack the trenches in front. But the wire entanglements were still standing, and again the terrible holocaust took place. Men tore at the wires till their hands were cut and bleeding; but the barrier still stood, effectively barring their progress, and all the time the machine guns spat out their endless stream of bullets.

The advance was resumed on the morning of the 11th; but the old strongholds still held out. The positions about the Moulin du Pietre and the bridge over the Layes barred progress. They were strengthened by numbers of houses dotted over the front. It was seen that the artillery must support the attack if it were to succeed. But here a new factor entered. The effectiveness of artillery in the war was due almost entirely to careful aerial reconnaissance. But on the morning of the 11th a fog rendered aerial observation impossible; and the cut telephone wires practically isolated the troops from their chief arm in the trench battles, the artillery. When once it was set going it could not be stopped. Its object achieved, the infantry advanced. But the artillery did not stop, and the men found themselves shelled out of hardly won positions by their own guns.

During the night of the 11th, heavy reinforcements began to reach the German lines for the counter-attack. The reinforcements were not so heavy as might have been owing to the action of the 3rd Corps, which at midnight advanced about Armentières, and in a brisk little engagement succeeded in carrying the village of L'Épinette and adjacent farms. With little loss an advance was made of 300 yards



on a front of half a mile. The enemy's various attempts to retake the position all failed with heavy loss. A further operation to pin the enemy to the ground was arranged for ten o'clock next morning to the south-west of the village of Wytschaete ; but a dense fog shrouded the district, and the attack, postponed until four o'clock in the afternoon, could achieve no more than an effective distraction.

Meanwhile, the expected counter-attacks had taken place. The artillery, hampered again by fog, could not prevent the reinforcements arriving, and could not give effective support to the troops either in defence or to continue the advance. Before it was yet light the enemy could be distinguished, a blurred mass, moving forward in dense formation to the attack. The men seemed to have attacked in columns. They had some artillery support, which the British troops bore well, though not without casualties. The trenches were not the elaborate defences they became after a week or so, and the cover being insufficient the losses were not slight. But they were small compared with those of the Germans. The British machine guns took their revenge and wrought great havoc on an easy target. The Germans pressed forward, gallantly enough ; but few reached the British defences alive, and the ground in front of the assailed positions was littered with dead. The attacks were continued for some time, but were beaten off with ease. The ground gained could not be retaken by the Germans, but neither could it be added to without further heavy loss ; and hence Sir John French gave orders to Sir Douglas Haig to suspend further offensive operations for the present, and to consolidate the ground gained.

On the 13th and the 14th the men engaged in the attack were little by little relieved. Many were worn out before their turn came, and were even found asleep standing. The trenches were wet. The weather was damp and foggy, and when the mist went, it was to give place to a biting cold wind. Mere fatigue and discomfort are often more difficult to bear patiently than the severest wounds. The casualties in the three days' fighting were very heavy. They included 190 officers and 2,337 men killed, 359 officers and 8,174 men wounded, and 23 officers and 1,728 men missing. Thirty German officers and 1,657 men were captured, several thousand dead were counted on the field ; and it was reported that over 12,000 \* wounded were removed by train. These losses were the price of a British advance of about a mile over a front of not quite two and a half miles. It was incidents such as these, repeated over and over again during the war, which proved that it was not the lines that were impregnable, but that they were as strong as the men who supported them. The organised force of armies has to be much weakened before a decision can be reached in positional warfare, and at that point lines become an irrelevance.

**St. Eloi.**—A German attack was initiated on 14th March at a point of some importance farther to the north. The village of St. Eloi, lying not two miles almost due south of Ypres, was well guarded by the enceinture of trenches and a naturally strong point, a mound which lay to the south-east of the village. Mist had fallen all over this British front at about this time, and while it made artillery work difficult it offered a most effective screen behind which to prepare for any attack. The position was held by the 27th Division (Plumer's Corps) of the 2nd Army. Behind the screen of mist a heavy concentration of artillery had been made ; and at 5 P.M. on the 14th, the British troops were subjected to a heavy bombardment. The artillery seemed to work up to a crisis ; and at this point a mine was exploded under the mound, and a heavy force of infantry was hurled against the trenches and the mound.

\* Probably an appreciable exaggeration.

The attack had been well timed. There were but few hours of daylight yet remaining, and if the position could be won it would be safe for the night, during which the Germans could consolidate their gain.

This is exactly what happened. The heavy artillery attack and the explosion of the mine caused a certain amount of confusion in the trenches, and parts of the first line were rushed. The advance and success were paid for in heavy losses, as the British artillery had opened fire, and the troops, although taken at a great disadvantage, were cool and self-possessed. But the possession of various points of the first line of British trenches rendered the holding of other parts extremely difficult. Such sections were enfiladed from the points already seized, and darkness coming on, the troops had to retire as night fell. But a counter-attack was at once arranged. A reserve brigade was brought up, and the attack began at 2 A.M. In one hour the 82nd Brigade had captured all of the village in German hands, and trenches east and west. A little later the bulk of the lost ground, all "of material importance," had been regained. The German attack upon the position had failed, and a further attempt to recapture the trenches on the 17th was similarly unsuccessful.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Battle of Neuve Chapelle and the attack upon St. Eloi hang together. A number of movements, as we have seen, took part on the British front, apart from that which recaptured Neuve Chapelle, but not really dissociated from it. Such movements were the attacks from Givenchy and the capture of L'EpINETTE. In both of the main movements—a piercing operation and a flank attack—which aim at producing a decision in warfare, the enemy must be held upon the secondary fronts while the main attack is being launched; and the means to hold an enemy to his lines is simply to attack him vigorously. No flank attack could be pressed to a successful issue if the enemy were not attacked on the front with such vigour that he could not send reinforcements to the threatened flank. Similarly, in these frontal attacks in France, simultaneous attacks had to be delivered at other points of the enemy's line, so that he should find it impossible to succour the point at which the main attack was being flung. On the other hand, a general might reasonably suppose that, if he has been attacked in great force on one part of the front, his enemy is probably weaker upon another distant section. And this explains the attack upon St. Eloi. A violent attack in force had been thrown against Neuve Chapelle. The success had been costly, and the attacking force was left wearied and a little disorganised. An immediate attack upon St. Eloi would, therefore, seem to hold out good prospects of success.

The recapture of Neuve Chapelle disproved completely the fiction of an impregnable front \* and interpreted the misleading term "deadlock." If the whole operation had been carried through with the precision and success of the earlier movements in it, the success would have been decisive and the losses much smaller. The delay after the capture of the village gave the Germans time to recover. Still the engagement had shown that the British troops had suffered nothing from the winter's inactivity, and were just as capable of heroism and steadfastness as though they had not had the enervating experience of months in the same trenches. The deadlock was simply, to use the analogy of Colonel Maude, the static position of a siege or investment. Even the investing lines drawn straightly about the enemy

\* That is, apart from the troops which hold it.



were not so strong as to preclude sorties from the beleaguered army. The lines could be carried farther in, if need be, by sharp attacks ; but from the nature of the case the garrison was being rendered daily a *little* less capable of resistance.

### III. THE FALL OF PRZEMYSL.

ALTHOUGH the spring and summer of 1915 were to see the Russian armies suffer defeat after defeat, the spring actually opened with a great Russian success. On 22nd March the Galician fortress Przemyśl fell into Russian hands, and almost immediately a crisis came about upon the Carpathians. The fall of the great fortress gave into the hands of the Russians a large force of prisoners, and sent over the whole Russian line a wave of enthusiasm, vastly increasing the *moral* of the soldiers, a reinforcement which is analogous to increasing the numbers. It also actually reinforced their numbers with the army of investment.

The enthusiasm aroused in Russian minds is not difficult to understand. Przemyśl was founded at least ten centuries ago, by Russian princes of Galicia, and the stronghold had changed hands many times during its stormy career. The capture of the fortress had thus in it something of the romance of a recovery. But the taking of Przemyśl meant much more than that. The fortress had come to represent in the Russian mind the Austrian resistance in Galicia, and it is certain that so long as it held out it was the objective of Austrian strategy in the Carpathians. Its fall, therefore, meant that the object upon which Austrian hopes and ambitions had been centred for months, had at length been definitely taken.

The town of Przemyśl lies about an angle of the river San in the bend before it turns north towards the Vistula, after leaving the Carpathians and Southern Galicia. East and due south it looks to the Galician plain, which stretches from the Carpathian foothills. But west it is bounded by hill country. Through it runs the most important railway of Galicia. The main line, which runs from Russia through Lemberg to Cracow, bends at Przemyśl to go through that city which commands it. Through it also runs one of the main lines which connects Galicia with Hungary. South-west the railway runs through the Dukla Pass across the Carpathians. The town, therefore, is a most important railway centre. The town itself stands high, though it is commanded by the hills on the west and north-west ; and hence it was a fortress rather in spite of its position than because of it. Eight forts defended the town, six of them being situated in the hill country to the west and north-west. One stood north of the San towards the east, and there was a double work south of the San towards the east. The main road to the north and the main road to the south cut off the six works in the hill country from those in the eastern plain. The strongest fort was the double work, lying east of this main road to the south. It was more isolated than the others, as it lay nearly six miles from the next fort on the east side, and almost the same distance from the nearest fort west of the main road. The next strongest was the northernmost, which commanded the main north road ; and the highest was the central fort between the western arm of the San and the southern mainroad. The distances between the forts varied between two thousand and ten thousand yards, and there was a considerable variation between the distances from the centre of the town, the average being about four miles.

Besides these forts, there were about the same number of smaller and less formidable works, and numbers of temporary works were built during the siege. A little less than a mile from the centre of the city the ground was entrenched. The entrenchment was not perfectly uniform, as the ground varies; and where the ground rises much, as in the north-west, the trenches were carried to the crests. The distance from the centre of the town to the forts on the north-west show that it was never subjected to strict siege bombardment, since the heavy pieces which were used in the war had a considerably greater range than the five thousand yards which separated the easternmost fort from the city, and this and the neighbouring works could have been battered to bits by fire from the many hidden positions in the hill country on this front. The fortress had thus been prepared to withstand a prolonged siege and to yield only to assault in the end. The railway bridge towards the east had been broken, and everything seemed shaped to this end. But the only effect this had, in the actual event, was that communications, being thus cut off from Lemberg, the hungry garrison could on capitulation not be fed as quickly as was wished.

The outer line of forts must have been between twenty-five and thirty miles in circumference, and the forts were connected with trenches built in the most modern scientific style—that is to say, almost impregnable, except under heavy howitzer fire. The forts were approached by a glacis so gently sloping as to afford a perfect field of fire; but before this was a ditch with rows of barbed wire entanglements, which made the approach practically impossible for infantry, unless with considerable help from guns. The guns mounted in the forts included some 12-inch pieces. Heavier ones had been in place at the outbreak of the war; but they were borrowed by the Germans. The fortress was thus very strong, though not of the strongest. The fact that it held out nearly five months is not a tribute to its strength, but merely signifies that it fell to investment and not to heavy siege guns. In fact, not a single shot fell into the city during the whole operation. The forts could never have survived five months' bombardment from heavy siege guns. The Russian lines had to be drawn a very great distance round the fortress, probably something like twice the perimeter of the permanent defences. This would give lines of some fifty miles. On this line the Russian army of Selivanov—another of the old generals, like Hindenburg, who were winning laurels with the best of the young commanders—dug itself in and prepared to wait for the fortress to capitulate.

The investment had been completed on 27th September, when, with the fall of Jaroslav, the army engaged in that operation had driven in the garrison of the fortress and cut it off from the rest of the world. Artillery was brought up and the permanent works were bombarded. But the garrison was well provisioned and well munitioned, and made a good defence. In mid-October, with the advance of the German army on Warsaw and the Austrian advance on the line of the San, the Russians abandoned the investment of the fortress and fell back for a short time. But by 3rd November the tide had turned once more, even in Galicia, where the struggle had lasted longest, and the Russian line again ran in advance of the fortress. The Russians pressed forward and threw their troops over the Carpathians. The struggle in this quarter became recurrently of extreme severity. The Austrians could not resist the lure of the fortress, and made repeated attempts to relieve it. On the other hand, the garrison made a number of sorties. At one time, when the Austrians advanced through the Lupkow Pass, some fifty miles distant, and pushed forward into Galicia, a sortie was made from Przemyśl, which pressed outwards to about fifteen



miles of the relieving army. But the Russians tightened their grip and threw the garrison back. A little later they advanced against the Austrians, and the most critical moment had passed. Towards the end of January the Austrians again pressed across the Carpathians, and hope beat high in Przemyśl; but the Russians again were too strong. In March the garrison made several sorties. On 13th March the village of Malkowica was captured. A large part of the garrison was holding the position when, on the 12th, the Russians advanced with the object of driving the garrison within the forts. The Austrians had installed guns in the village. The lines swayed to and fro, and night fell with the engagement still undecided. In the darkness the Russians re-attacked, and despite a heavy fire seized the enemy trenches. The position was quickly put in a state of defence, and the Russians swept onward. Machine guns were brought up, and under a terrible fire the Austrians evacuated the village. It was a point of much importance, lying not five miles from the centre of the city, and commanding the two neighbouring forts. The capture of the village assured the Russian Staff that the end was near.

Further symptoms of the approaching fall of the fortress were the firing off of an extraordinary amount of ammunition on the 18th and 19th. Beginning early in the morning of the 18th, the bombardment went on with little cessation up to the night of the 19th. This totally useless operation was probably a means of consuming as much as possible of the still large stores of ammunition which remained in the Austrian hands. In the early morning of the 21st, a complete Austrian division made a determined sortie towards the east in the direction of Medyka. By the afternoon, after repeated endeavours to reach the Russian trenches, the Austrians were driven back within the line of the forts. The casualties were enormous, and the prisoners alone numbered 107 officers and 3,954 men. That was the last sortie, and it seems to have been a stupid attempt to justify the governor's subsequent conduct to himself. The abortive effort, indeed, seems more insane the more it is examined in detail. There were some 130,000 men in the fortress, yet only 30,000 were employed in the sortie, and the men marched out in full campaigning kit. When it is known that most of them were near starvation, the insanity of such an operation seems too clear to need elaboration.

That night was a restless one for the fortress and for the investing lines. All night long there were constant reports of explosions from the fortress, as the Austrians set about destroying all that could be useful to the conqueror. Explosives were fired off or dumped into the river. Bridges were blown up. Thousands of windows were broken by the explosions. Guns were rendered unworkable, even rifles were smashed. It is strange that in this operation the Austrians seem to have put more energy and ingenuity than in any other connected with the investment. Early in the morning the place as a fortress had been rendered useless, and negotiations were opened for surrender. After a little negotiation an unconditional surrender was agreed to, and the Russians were astounded to find in their hands so huge a prize. General Kusmanek, the commandant of the fortress, returned the garrison as consisting of 9 generals, 93 superior officers, 2,500 subaltern officers and officials, and 117,000 rank and file—a number almost double that of the militia force which had contained Przemyśl.

When the surrender occurred the advance forts were already in Russian hands, and the concrete redoubts had been beaten to pieces. On hearing the noise of the explosion as the works were being blown up on the morning of the 22nd, Russian

forces flung themselves within the fortification, and in an hour or two had seized the inner works. Meanwhile, negotiations had been opened for surrender, and soon all was arranged. The Austrians had even shot their horses to prevent them falling into Russian hands. The transfer of the fortress took place very quietly, in a manner totally different from that which the Germans loved to employ. No spic and span army corps marched the streets in stiff parade step to impress the population that remained. Instead, it would have been difficult for the casual observer to detect any great difference in the town after the capitulation, except that Russian soldiers were to be seen mingling with the Austrians. A few military motor cars went in to the Austrian headquarters. Then small bodies of troops to take over the routine work of the garrison, and then came a Russian transport column, bringing food for the half-starved people. Mr. Stanley Washburn pointed out the remarkable friendliness with which the Russians were received both by the prisoners and populace. "The fall of Przemyśl strikes one as being the rarest thing possible in war, namely, a defeat the joy of which seems to be shared by all parties interested. The Russians rejoice in a fortress captured, the Austrians at a chance to eat and rest, while the civilians, long since sick of the quarrel, at the prospect of a return to normal conditions." \* The same observer pointed out, that when the pinch of hunger came, as come it did quite suddenly, the common soldiers felt it first and then civilians. Horses, cats, and dogs were killed for food. But the officers never varied their diet. Sleek and well-groomed they greeted the victors in the streets. They had not suffered at all. The surrender had evidently been timed to take place before the pinch of hunger could reach them. The contrast between the Austrian officers and the Russian, who shared alike in all things with their soldiers, was very obvious.

Day by day systems of relief were organised, though the Austrians in blowing up the bridges had made the relief less rapid than it might have been. Each day, too, as many prisoners as the railway could accommodate, were sent off into Russia. General Artamonoff, the new Governor of Przemyśl, soon took up his quarters in the city, and the administration little by little approached the normal once more.

The effect of the fall of the fortress was great and immediate. The main line of communication in Galicia had no longer any hiatus throughout its length. The lure of the fortress was taken from Austria-Hungary, and with it the subconscious fear in the minds of the Galician people that the Austrians would return. The Russians in the field resumed their fighting with a renewed confidence in their leaders, and in themselves. A large force was released to be flung into the scale on the Carpathian front at once. The Russian Staff had justified its judgment in not attempting to do more than invest the fortress; but no one dreamed that behind the fortifications there lay such a vast garrison, and that, when the time arrived, over three army corps would fall into their hands. The fact proved that, as the text-books say, "the fate of a fortress is in the field." The peculiar ignominy of the surrender lay in the circumstance that the containing force had been only half as strong as the garrison, and at best it consisted of militia. General Selivanov, who had won fame in the Russo-Japanese War, and had proved the wisdom of his choice by his success, was one of the first to fall in the Russian Revolution.

\* Account published in the *Times*, 16th April.



## IV. THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES.

THE series of battles which go to make up the first struggle for Ypres were among the fiercest of the whole war. They were also the most costly to the Germans, and, failing of their effect, they were a dead loss. The full German casualty list can have been little short of a quarter of a million, including many of the best German troops. The whole operation was a complete failure from the German point of view, and the attack upon Ypres developed as though by accident; for the Germans had not secured the coast when it lay open to them, and they only tried to take it when the British were attempting the much more ambitious operation of turning the German flank, and so forcing the enemy out of France and Belgium. Sir John French's eyes were, as we have seen, first directed to Ghent and Bruges before those of the German Staff had visualised the loss of the Channel coast, which was, after the entry of Britain, one of the chief enemy objectives. Moltke was replaced by General von Falkenhayn on 25th October for this crowning error of overlooking the possibility of an attempt to defend the Channel coast. There was none, of course, at first, and the defence of the coast only matured as the German advance was pressed. After the fall of Antwerp the 7th Division and the 3rd Cavalry Division were forced to fall back towards the south-east. As they passed Roulers they came at length to the Ypres district. The Belgian army on their left had also reached a line in the Belgian coastal area. The British were hastening up to this same district from the Aisne, and hence, automatically the Channel coast became covered by the Allies. Sir John French still visualised an advance. He directed an attack by the 7th Division upon Menin; but the tired and weakened troops were incapable of so pronounced an advance against vastly superior numbers.

Thus between the Germans, now pressing hotly forward as they saw the coast railed off by the Allied troops, and the Allies, intent on holding what they possessed even if they could not press a substantial advance, a first position of equilibrium was struck on a line from the coast, which made a fairly broad semicircular salient at a point near Becelaere, some six miles due east of Ypres. The struggle about Ypres developed, not from any particular foresight upon any one's part nor from any particular necessity, but from the first equilibrium of forces, one striking east and north and the other striking south and west. The salient about Ypres proves that in this first measuring of forces the Allies had the advantage to some extent; but a salient, while strong for an army in motion, is weak for an army in defence. It affords a leverage whereby the hold upon the enemy's line may be increased more readily; but at the same time a judicious disposition of the enemy will allow the troops within the salient to be enfiladed, and under such a disadvantage, any but a very broad salient is liable to fall. There is, of course, every incentive on the enemy's part to bring such pressure to bear, since a salient in his line is a source of weakness to it. There was one other reason for the attack upon this section of the line. Apart from the fact that west of Ypres lay important railway communications, there was the further consideration that a defensive line thrown about a town of any size labours under a great disadvantage. The town is of no use to the defenders. It is constantly under bombardment, and may be fired at any minute. And if the defenders should be compelled to retreat, they must fall back past obstacles which will, almost inevitably, produce confusion and may lead to a disastrous rout.

For these reasons the attack upon Ypres developed in the autumn. It was pressed with the utmost fury for nearly three weeks, and was only abandoned on 11th November, when even Bavarians and the Prussian Guard, although outnumbering the defenders by two or three to one, could not break through, and the losses were so great. But the Channel coast did not cease to be an object of intense preoccupation to the Germans. Failing Calais and Boulogne, Zeebrugge was converted into a submarine base; but this could not in any sense compensate for the loss of the former ports. In the spring the Germans gave a futile earnest of what they would do if they gained Calais by bombarding Dunkirk with guns from a point near Dixmude, some twenty-three miles distant. Yet the second struggle for Ypres does not seem to have been directly part of an attempt to break through to the coast, though it came much nearer achieving this than any of the earlier attempts. Certainly, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, the whole position was for some days in the balance, and if the effect of the German attack could have been fully foreseen by the German Staff, it is incredible that they should not have concentrated sufficient troops to press it home.

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The second struggle for Ypres, in all probability, arose from a determination of the Germans to anticipate an Allied offensive. In determining to attack in anticipation of an Allied offensive the Germans had two important advantages. They could utilise the element of surprise by an attack at an unsuspected point, and they could select the point which was weakest in defence and most promising for a resolute attack. They had determined to augment the element of surprise in a way which, it may fairly be said, would only have occurred to the Germans. They had resolved to make an attack by poisonous gases.\* The advantage to be gained from this is obvious. The Hague Convention and the general consensus of civilised opinion forbids the use of shells which are solely and directly meant to poison. All shells, even Lyddite shells, which the British use, give out fumes which tend to stupefy and poison. They are not forbidden, since their first effect is to destroy by explosion, by dispersing shrapnel bullets or broken shell. The humanity or reasonableness of the two ideas is not in question. The whole point is that the Hague Convention was signed by Germany without reservation. Great Britain signed on condition that it was a real Convention—that is, of universal application. France and the United States, not seeing the reasonableness of the distinction, did not sign. The advantage gained by going back upon the practice expected of Germany was obvious. It was worth much artillery or many men.

The Ypres salient, upon which the second attack was opened, was much different from that which had borne the first German offensive in autumn. Indeed, such was the secrecy of events happening upon the Franco-British front, that even the careful student did not discover until long after the event that so great an area had been abandoned to the Germans. Before the German attack opened the British line ran from near Langemarck in a broad curve to the east of Broodseinde, thence almost due south and very slightly east to Becelaere, whence it curved south-west slightly in front of Gheluvelt, thence in a curve east and south till it struck north of Hill 60, whence south-west to a little in front of St. Eloi. North of the British line lay the French. The junction occurred north of the St. Julien-Poelcapelle road, and

\* Gas shells had been used, as we have already seen, in the winter battle on the Bzura; but Ludendorff admits that they were not, on that occasion, a complete success.



the French line ran in front of Langemarck westward, and then north in front of Steenstraete and Bixschoote. It was this section of the Ypres salient which the Germans selected for attack. They knew that the French section of the line was held by a division of French Colonials, the least efficient fighting material of their army. The regular troops had been drawn off for the offensive in the Artois. The British dispositions were nowhere in this section of great strength. Much artillery had been sent farther south, and the whole of the front which became subject to attack was in the best state for a German victory—unprepared. The Canadian



The Salient before and after the German Attack.

division, under General Alderson, held the left of the British line to the Ypres-Zonnebeke railway. From the railway to near Becelaere, which is on the edge of Polygon Wood, lay the 28th Division, under General Bulfin, the 27th Division joined on to the 83rd Brigade of the 28th Division, Princess Patricia's regiment, being to the left. This division, under General Snow, continued the line to near Hill 60, where the 5th Division, under General Morland, held the line.

**Hill 60.**—Such were the dispositions when the German attack opened. It seems probable that the attack may have been precipitated by an offensive, initiated by

the British on 17th April. In the evening of that day the British made a determined attempt to secure a point of such tactical value that it may have seemed to the Germans that the promised offensive was about to begin. Lord Kitchener had been reported as saying that the war would "commence in May" and it had been generally understood that there would be a big offensive on the Western front about that time. The movement of 17th April was made against the mound of earth, which had grown up from the cutting of the Ypres-Lille railway. This was the famous Hill 60. The British line here curved sharply eastward, and then continued in a south-easterly direction. Due south of Hill 60 is Hollebeke, which lies nearly two miles east of the line of battle. The value of Hill 60 was that it gave a position from which Hollebeke could be commanded, and hence, if the Germans were to maintain the line to the west, they could not afford to let this position of advantage fall into our hands. And while it was retained there could be no movement of British troops in the neighbouring part of the salient. During winter this point had been the centre of an almost continual struggle between the French—who then held that part of the line—and the Germans. It had changed hands on several occasions; but when the British relieved the French in February, it was in German hands.

The British attack opened by the explosion of a number of mines, which blew up a line of German entrenchments and a company of men. Two battalions, Royal West Kents and 2nd Scottish Borderers, went forward and occupied the crest of the hill. Early next morning the Germans counter-attacked in massed order, but suffered heavy loss from machine-gun fire. Attack after attack was made upon the British position, and there were points where the Germans even forced their way into our trenches. Much of the fighting was hand to hand, a character of fighting which the "Tommy" likes best of all. By night, when the two British battalions were relieved, the German attacks had ceased, and the hill was still in British hands. During the next four days the hill, a rather dwindling hill under the terrible and persistent rain of shells, was the scene of the most violent and terrible struggle. The length of the front was less than an eighth of a mile, but it projected like a triangle with the apex facing south-east into the German line.

During these days, the only rest the defenders had from the terrible rain of shells was the prelude to immediate infantry attack. On the night of the 20th, after a determined attack of this sort, there was an almost continuous hand-to-hand struggle with grenades and bombs. It was then that the 9th London (Territorials) Regiment showed its mettle, and Second-Lieutenant Geoffrey Woolley earned a V.C. for his gallantry when the only officer on the hill. Lieutenant George Roupell, of the 1st Surreys, also won the V.C. for holding on, with rapidly diminishing numbers, when wounded. The next morning the Germans for a few hours gained a foothold on the north-east slopes; but they were flung off and the hill remained in British hands, but over 3,000 dead lay on its shattered slopes. Many regiments had won distinction in the fighting which, by common agreement, seems to have been of a bitterer character than anything yet experienced by the British. The 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers, who were sent forward with the 1st Royal West Kents on the evening of the 17th to take possession of the hill, won special distinction. The hill, unfortunately, was lost by repeated gas attacks on 5th May.

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During the struggle for Hill 60 a bombardment had been opened upon the whole



British front. The heaviest guns were trained upon Ypres, where the streets still resounded to the shouts of children at play. Many of them were killed, as well as many adult civilians. The bombardment was kept up with disastrous effects so far as the town itself was concerned and its civilian inhabitants; but the British Staff looked upon it as a sort of distraction to prevent the sending of reinforcements to Hill 60, though some fears were felt for the safety of the Ypres salient from attack from the east. By extending the radius of bombardment inland, the Germans blocked the main avenues of supply to the salient. But it cannot be said the bombardment caused any serious anxiety. The position, however, was changed very suddenly. About six o'clock on the evening of Thursday, the 22nd, the 3rd Brigade of the Canadian Division, who were holding the most northerly part of the British section of the front, found their left flank open. It had been held, as we have said, by French Colonial troops, but these had fled in panic before a horrible new terror, and by seven o'clock German troops, rushing through the four-mile gap left by the Turcos and Zouaves, had swept to the rear of the Canadians.

The instrument which had caused this panic-stricken flight was a gas machine. There is evidence that even in 1909 Germany was experimenting with apparatus for directing clouds of asphyxiating gases. They had experimented to some effect, for the apparatus used on and after 22nd April was successful in producing the most terrible effects. This was partly due to the gas selected. Chlorine was chosen for a number of reasons. One was the fact that in producing hydrogen for the Zeppelins chlorine is also produced; and it was quite in keeping with German thoroughness to make use of a by-product which was obtained in large quantities. Another reason was that chlorine, being heavier than air, will naturally tend to cling to the ground, and will not be so easily dispersed as a lighter gas. In fact, the use of chlorine at all necessitated a favourable wind blowing towards the Allied trenches. Chlorine gas is a heavy green vapour with an unpleasant and suffocating smell. The 1st Canadian Brigade, who on this April evening were in reserve, saw its effects upon the French soldiery. Some of these fled far from the terrible death-dealing cloud. Men frothing at the lips, blue and gasping for breath, with agony painted upon their faces—these were the samples of the effects of the new terror. It is an odd thing, and one which should be among the many subjects of inquiry after the war, that a full and specific warning had been obtained in the early part of April from German prisoners. On 6th April, "Eye-Witness" wrote, the Germans "are preparing a more novel reception for us in front of parts of our lines. They propose to asphyxiate our men, if they advance, by means of poisonous gas." Surely the provision of respirators would have been an elementary precaution in face of such a warning.

The German troops who poured through the gap in the Allied line wore, over their mouths and noses, pads soaked in a solution of bicarbonate of soda. The Turcos had not reached the British reserves long before the men were formed up, and marched to the gap left by the French Colonials. The left of the Canadians lay, at the opening of the attack, slightly west and south of Poelcapelle. The first effect of the gas attack was to break the line west of the Poelcapelle-St. Julien road. The French ran, and were pressed by the advancing Germans to the Yser canal, along which lay those who had not fled south from Boesinghe to Steenstraate. Such were the terror and confusion of the attack, such, indeed, the terrible suffering it carried, that little attempt was made even to defend the canal. The gas cloud was blown on; heavy artillery followed, and the Germans, covered by their guns, protected against the

peril of the gas, pressed forward. For the time being all efforts to re-form the Turcos were unavailing. They had shown their superb gallantry and fire in August at Charleroi. Here they were the victims of a devilish attack, which had a more intimate terror for them than for European troops. Brigadier-General Turner, V.C., in charge of the 3rd Brigade of the Canadians, was placed in a most difficult position. Unsupported, he could not hold his left in the old position against an attack by overwhelming odds assisted by the cloud of gas. He was compelled to draw back his left to the wood which lies slightly west of St. Julien. His line then made almost a right angle with the point towards Poelcapelle. West of the wood there was still the gap. To attempt to fill this the 3rd and 2nd Brigade reserves were brought forward. The wood became the scene of a violent struggle. It held a battery of 4.7 guns, lent by the 2nd London Division. Lieutenant-Colonel Leekie, with the 16th Battalion, and Lieutenant-Colonel Boyle, with the 10th Battalion of Canadian Scottish, advanced through the wood against a terrible machine-gun fire at midnight and re-took the guns. Those who remember the time will recall the conflicting official reports. The British report claimed that the guns had been retaken. A later German report stated that they were in German hands. The truth is, that they were retaken, but they could not be removed. Their gun teams were miles away. So the gallant Canadians, who had recaptured them, could do no better than make them useless, before they were compelled to fall back by a heavy bombardment of artillery.

All through the night the struggle continued. At six o'clock on the Friday morning the left of the Canadians was seen to be so threatened that, as an attempt to relieve it, it was determined to make a counter-attack towards the new German front. This was carried out by the Ontario 1st and 4th Battalions, belonging to Brigadier-General Mercer's 1st Brigade, with the assistance of a British Brigade. The counter-attack was directed towards the gap made by the retiring French. "It did not seem," wrote the Canadian "Eye-Witness," "that any human being could live in the shower of shot and shell which began to play upon the advancing troops. They suffered terrible casualties. For a short time every other man seemed to fall. The 4th Battalion at one moment came under a particularly withering fire. For a moment—not more—it wavered. Its most gallant commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Burchill, carrying, after an old fashion, a light cane, coolly and cheerfully rallied his men, and at the very moment when his example had infected them, fell dead at the head of his battalion. With a hoarse cry of anger, they sprang forward (for, indeed, they loved him) as if to avenge his death. The astonishing attack which followed, pushed home in the face of direct frontal fire, made in broad daylight, by battalions whose names should live for ever in the memories of soldiers, was carried to the first line of German trenches. After a hand-to-hand struggle, the last German who resisted was bayoneted, and the trench was won. This charge, made by men who looked death indifferently in the face, saved, and that was much, the Canadian left. But it did more. Up to the point where the assailants conquered or died, it secured and maintained, during the most critical moment of all, the integrity of the Allied line. For the trench was not only taken, but held until the night of Sunday, the 25th, when it was relieved."

The whole history of the Canadian part in saving the Allied line was, indeed, enacted upon the epic scale. Fighting against the heaviest odds in men, battered under a storm of shells from three directions, struggling against the sickness, stupor, and suffocation caused by the gas, they held firm. There was the terrible contagion



of the rout on their left ; but, though they wavered, the 13th Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Montreal, and the 15th Battalion, 48th Highlanders, who had to stand against the full effect of the gas, recovered and maintained their first position. The gas was sent against the Canadians early on Friday morning. Major Norsworthy, of the Montreal Royal Highlanders, was bayoneted and killed as he coolly rallied his men when they were almost surrounded. Captain M'Cuaig, of the same battalion, was severely wounded, and, when his men were ordered to retire, he insisted on being left behind in the abandoned trench rather than encumber the retreating men. He asked that two loaded revolvers should be left with him.

The alignment of the Allied front on Friday morning was, as a moment's study of the map will make clear, purely temporary. The Ontario 1st and 4th Battalions, with the British hastily drawn from reserve, linked up with the 3rd Brigade on the opposite side of the wood to the west of St. Julien. Thence, facing north and slightly east, it extended to near Boesinghe, the left resting upon the canal. The British detachment comprised the supporting companies of the various battalions of the 28th Division, with a mixture of troops in reserve, under Colonel Geddes, of the 2nd Buffs. To the north, Steenstraete was still held by the Allies, but the Germans were investing it, and had taken Lizerne and Het Sas ; farther south, the French still clung to the east of the canal. The situation was critical, as the Allied line had been struck at a carefully chosen point, where the British, French, and Belgians joined, and the breach in the line threatened to cut off the Belgians from the Franco-British troops completely. British cavalry were being hurried up to support the rallying French, but salvation came from them alone. The French on Friday morning flung the Germans out of Lizerne and drove them back to the canal ; but the bridgehead was obstinately maintained, and in the evening the Germans rallied and seized Lizerne once more, only to be again ejected. But they still held the bridgehead and a footing on the west side of the canal. During Friday an intense bombardment was opened against the whole front from Polygon Wood to the canal. The 3rd Canadian Brigade, which had borne most of the worst part of the attack, was in serious straits. It had borne almost every trial : bombardment by guns of all calibres from three converging points, gas attacks, lack of food for almost a day, and had been withdrawn to the wood. Then, as some Germans had forced their way into the gap on the east of the wood, and were between it and St. Julien, the left of the brigade had to be withdrawn farther still. " Selling every yard of the ground dearly," it fell back on St. Julien, much smaller in numbers, but with undaunted courage.

The morning of Saturday opened with another bombardment and a further dispersal of chlorine gas, which was pumped from cylinders and was blown across the British trenches in a few minutes. The men, still unprovided with any safeguard against the attack, had the additional horror of seeing it coming and knowing what its effects would be. It rolled over the tops of the trenches, like a liquid, and there was no escape from it. Under this terrible experience, the heroic Canadians were withdrawn beyond St. Julien, and the left of the 2nd Brigade was now in a position similar to that of the 3rd Brigade at the opening of the gas attack. Lieutenant-Colonel Lipsett, commanding the 8th Battalion, 90th Winnipeg Rifles, held the extreme left. His battalion had been expelled from their trenches by the gas attack upon Friday ; but, recovering in three-quarters of an hour, " it counter-attacked, retook the trenches it had abandoned, and bayoneted the enemy. And

after the 3rd Brigade had been forced to retire, Lieutenant-Colonel Lipsett held his position, though his left was in the air, until two British regiments filled up the gap on Saturday night." It was this defiant courage which saved the situation, for the Germans were prevented getting to the rear of the British farther south. The 3rd Brigade recovered a little of its lost ground, but about midday fell back again to a point slightly north of the tiny village of Fortuin. Two Montreal regiments—the few hundreds that remained—could not be withdrawn in time. They were left at St. Julien, and their persistent rifle fire during the rest of the day and into the night showed with what extraordinary spirit the abandoned rearguard was holding. "If they died, they died worthy of Canada." On the canal the French counter-attacked, but made little progress, and the Germans took Steenstraate, though the Belgians destroyed the bridge and thus prevented any advance across the canal.

The Canadians were now being gradually replaced by other troops. They had gone through a terrible ordeal with a courage which will ever be remembered throughout the British Empire. The whole of the threatened section of the salient was being strengthened and re-formed. To the west of the section, which had held from the left of the Canadian 3rd Brigade, were sent the 13th Brigade of the 5th Division, which had only recently been withdrawn from Hill 60. Parts of the 4th Division were behind the Canadians, and went forward as they came back, until the Canadians were all out of the line for the rest they so much needed. Before the withdrawal, an attempt was made to recapture St. Julien. It began on Sunday morning by the 10th Brigade of the 4th Division, under General Hull; but before the day was over, nearly a whole division was fighting under his direction. At the north-eastern corner of the salient the Germans replied with a rain of asphyxiating shells. At Broodseinde, slightly to the south, asphyxiating shells and artillery were used. The northern line of the salient, driven in to the form of a rough irregular curve, was held by a jumble of troops, including battalions from several divisions, among which was the Lahore Division with many famous Indian troops. The attack upon St. Julien failed. The village had become by this time strongly fortified, and the advancing troops were met with streams of bullets from numerous machine guns. It was one of these situations—and there are many in a modern battle—where artillery cannot be used, and success or failure rests upon the infantry.\* The British troops suffered heavy loss.

The 2nd Canadian Brigade was withdrawn that night. It had paid dearly for its heroism, and it was yet to pay more; for early next morning the remnants of this gallant unit were ordered back to the front as the reinforcements were still not sufficient to hold the line. They went without a murmur to add another day to their prolonged passion. On this salient, so stupidly held for pride and sentiment, they had, like the Australians in Gallipoli, astonished the world. There was probably never a moment when the position was safe from attack from at least two directions. It can scarcely be doubted that any commander, who had estimated the salient from a merely military point of view, would have abandoned it and fallen back behind Ypres. By this means, the line would have been strengthened, and only the miserable shell of the old town sacrificed. It was maintained, and the Canadians won imperishable fame for their share in its maintenance. Against the

\* The tanks, which are the appropriate means for dealing with such a situation, had not yet made their appearance.



most deadly peril of envelopment, these troops, assailed by the choking fumes of chlorine and the asphyxiating bombs, covered by a terrible hail of heavy and light guns, held their own and saved the day. For when the gas attack was first launched it was not only Ypres that was in peril, but the whole of the Allied line to the sea. The Canadian Division did not wholly leave the Ypres salient until Thursday. The three V.C.s awarded do not represent all the gallantry shown. But one was actually received, that of Captain Francis Scringer, a doctor; the other two heroes died.

The Indian troops were engaged upon Monday, though it was impossible for the bulk of them to penetrate to the fighting front. The Germans had thrown a barrage of artillery fire round the line where the armies were at grips, to prevent reinforcements. They succeeded in penetrating to Fortuin, on the Passchendaele road. They endeavoured to drive a wedge between Grafenstafel, on the north-east, where the British still stood, and Ypres to the west, the centre of the defence. They even pressed the Durham Light Infantry well behind Fortuin. To relieve this threatening pressure the Lahore Division, with General Riddell's Northumberland Brigade, counter-attacked towards St. Julien. But the British Brigade could not pass the barbed wire defences, and suffered terribly, the casualties amounting to some 2,000, including their commander. Westward the lines were pierced and thrown back. But the movement in the main succeeded, for by its help French regulars retook Lizerne and some of the trenches about Het Sas. At night, however, the Allied lines were in a worse state than ever. Drawn in from Broodseinde, pushed in south of Fortuin, thrown from the Passchendaele road, the line was at the mercy of a vigorous offensive.

Ypres all this time was under a great bombardment, which turned it into a blazing ruin. The German purpose was to hamper reinforcements and supply to the salient, and to some extent they succeeded. The continued shelling upon the south-east side of the town had had no appreciable effect, except to add to the general ruin of Ypres. It had now become a tragic sight. In the streets lay bodies of men and horses, which could not be removed owing to the continuous bombardment. The pavements had been battered and blown to bits. There were huge yawning holes in the streets, in some places exposing the sewers. Scattered about were bricks and stone, pieces of sculpture, crocket, and spires, broken carts, ambulances, motor cars, and even furniture. Whole roofs blown off houses, sides torn out, laid bare to the skies, or to the curious pedestrian a sight which might recall the buried villages of Herculaneum. Here would be a table laid for breakfast, plates and cups set out trimly upon the cloth; but all now covered with the dust of the ruined roof and walls.

The German attacks during the next few days seemed to have abated somewhat, and the Allied counter-attacks were being pressed. Sir Herbert Plumer had about this time succeeded General Smith-Dorrien in command of this area of the British front, and he had been ordered to take preliminary measures for the retirement to a new and safer line. Sir John French felt it imperative for the safety of his troops that the line should be straightened out and rendered more easily defensible than this dented salient; and yet the abandonment of ground, which had been held so long and was watered by so much of the blood of Britain's bravest sons, might still be avoided if the French could restore their section of the line. General Foch, in charge of the northern front, sent strong reinforcements to General Putz,

the commander in charge of this area ; but the attack on the morning of the 30th made no substantial progress, and on 1st May Sir Herbert Plumer was instructed to begin the withdrawal of his line, which he actually did on the night of 2nd May.

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A brief survey of the war would have revealed, at this moment, a strange medley of cross-currents. Russia was reeling under the hammer blows of Mackensen's phalanx. In Gallipoli the Allies were struggling to maintain the footing they had so gloriously won. Italy had just signed a treaty with Britain and France, and was shortly to join them against the Central Empires. To Western observers, in their ignorance of the last fact, the struggle about Ypres seemed to vie with the campaign in Gallipoli for the chief place in ultimate importance.

The retirement was carried out under the worst possible conditions. On the evening of 2nd May the Germans bombarded the whole of the line from the French sector to the easternmost point of the British section, with gas and asphyxiating bombs. The attack which followed was most violent towards St. Julien, and to the west. The reinforced French bore the attack well, and prevented the Germans securing any advantage. They were a little more successful against the British, though there were numerous individual acts of heroism. The men had by this time been provided with makeshift respirators. "During one of the heavy attacks made against our infantry gas was seen rolling forward from the enemy's trenches. Private Lynn, of the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, at once rushed to the machine gun without waiting to adjust his respirator. Single-handed he kept his gun in action the whole time the gas was rolling over, actually hoisting it on the parapet to get a better field of fire. Although nearly suffocated by the gas, he poured a stream of lead into the advancing enemy and checked their attack. He was carried to his dug-out ; but, hearing another attack was imminent, he tried to get back to his gun. Twenty-four hours later he died in great agony from the effects of the gas." Private Lynn had already won the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and he was now awarded the Victoria Cross.

The retirement, covered by such heroic deeds, was carried out with the greatest skill. There was little loss, though all the wounded had to be removed with care and speed behind the new lines. Snipers were left behind in the abandoned trenches to occupy any of the unwary among the enemy ; but the whole operation was carried out without his knowledge, and he showed this by bombarding the deserted trenches for some time before he discovered, late on 4th May, that the British had left them. This is the more remarkable that the trenches over a great part of the front were within speaking distance of each other, and at points were not a dozen yards distant. The ammunition and other supplies were removed or carefully buried. The new line, though shorter and more easily defensible, was still a salient and open, like all salients, to cross fire. It joined the French line on the Yser canal, about three-quarters of a mile west of the Ypres-Pilkem road, curved round eastwards to take in Shell Trap Farm, thence south of St. Julien and Fortuin, taking in Frezenberg ; then almost due south, about a quarter of a mile west of Westhoek, taking in Hooge, whence it ran south and slightly west to Hill 60. It had been withdrawn two miles eastward, nearly half the distance, that is to say, to Ypres ; and Shell Trap Farm was almost three miles south of the line, as it was before the gas attacks took place. It will be appreciated that the Germans had made a considerable gain so far as mere territory is concerned. The shortening and strengthening of the British line might



well have been effected long before, as we have seen. Even now it had not reached its final shape.

The following day, under renewed gas attacks, Hill 60 fell into German hands. The eastward bastion of Ypres now ran on a low rise of ground, which has been called the Frezenberg Ridge. This section of the front was held by the 28th Division, which had been stationed there since the first of the gas attacks in this quarter. It was a critical part of the line, since it commanded the direct roads to Ypres, as well as the Ypres-Roulers railway. On this section of the line a determined attack was opened upon 8th May. The fighting over the whole of the front seems to have been in gusts and the phase from 8th May to the 13th—the intensity being greatest on the first three days—marked the final stage of the attack proper in the second struggle for Ypres. The gas attack had not, until after this time, been effectively dealt with. A bombardment broke out at 7 A.M. on 8th May which completely obliterated the trenches and caused enormous losses. The infantry attack which followed caused the line to fall back. "The right of one brigade," says Sir Herbert Plumer, "was broken about 10.15 A.M.; then its centre, and then part of the left of the brigade in the next section to the south. The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, however, although suffering very heavily, stuck to their fire or support trenches throughout the day. . . . At 12.25 P.M. the centre of a brigade farther to the left also broke; its right battalion, however, the 1st Suffolks, which had been refused \* to cover a gap, still held on, and were apparently surrounded and overwhelmed. . . . At 11.30 A.M. a small party of Germans attempted to advance against the left of the British line, but were destroyed by the 2nd Essex Regiment."

As a result of this violent fighting Frezenberg, which had been a little behind the British line in the early morning, was lost; and a counter-attack in the afternoon, though it succeeded in reaching the village, could not recapture it. The line was pressed back to the tiny village of Verlorenhoek, and held there "despite repeated efforts to advance." That was the chief result of the fighting on the 8th and 9th, though it does no justice to the unnumbered deeds of cool courage, the record of some of which will in time pass into the heritage of the British race. Thus, there is the story of Colonel Marden, of the 1st Welsh Regiment, who held out, until ordered to retire, under impossible conditions. The message he sent to his superiors was: "My right flank is enfiladed, but I am quite comfortable; machine guns are operating on our left, but we can carry on all right." There is no conquering such a spirit as lives in these words. One length of trench is said to have received no fewer than 900 8-inch shells, but the gallant 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who tenanted it, still stood firm. It was these heroes who made the counter-attack on the 8th, towards Wieltje, and connected the old trench line with the ground gained during the attack.

On 11th and 12th May there were local bombardments and local struggles, in which a still further withdrawal was compelled by sheer number and weight of the German heavy guns. During the night of the 12th the 28th Division, which had held their front for three weeks of this terrible hammering by heavy guns and the trial by gas and asphyxiating shells, were withdrawn into reserve to rest. They left the trenches a sadly depleted force, and few of the small number of the survivors but had some terrible memory of the horrors of the new German methods. They were replaced by the 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions, under General de Lisle. They

\* That is, drawn back.

had little time to grow accustomed to their positions before what Sir Herbert Plumer describes as "the heaviest bombardment yet experienced" broke out. It was a cold wet morning when at 4.30 the bombardment opened. The shells fell so thick and fast upon the British lines, that time and again the men were buried under the wreck of the trenches; but in spite of this experience, the North Somerset Yeomanry, under Lieutenant-Colonel Geoffrey Glyn, not only stood firm, but even rose from their trenches and charged with the bayonet. By the afternoon the Germans had gained ground at various points, and two cavalry brigades made a dismounted charge, which, in spite of heavy shrapnel and shell fire, regained the original trenches. But under another violent bombardment by shells they were compelled to give way. The German attacks and counter-attacks were not made without severe loss. Thus, the 1st Hampshire Regiment repelled an attack and killed every German who got within fifty yards of their trenches. Many famous cavalry regiments lost heavily this day: the 18th and 10th Hussars, and the Blues among them. A Victoria Cross was gained by Sergeant Belcher, of the London Rifle Brigade (Territorials), by holding the right of the 4th Division with half a dozen men, two of them cavalymen he had pressed into service. The battalion had lost very heavily, indeed, and Belcher found himself holding an entrenchment with only four men. He collected the two Hussars, and though the trench was blown up, they made a brave show against a German infantry attack, utterly deceiving them, and holding them off until relieved.

The French on the British left succeeded on 16th May in forcing the Germans back across the canal "finding 2,000 German dead." The previous day they had made a strong attack upon Steenstraate and captured it; and on 17th May they pressed and maintained an advance on the east of the canal. It seemed as though by this time the struggle had worn itself out. The time of its greatest intensity, 22nd April to 13th May, was just a day over three weeks. At this time there were movements on other parts of the Allied line. The French were making vigorous attacks below Lens, and the British were attacking towards Festubert to support. These, no doubt, did draw off a considerable part of the heavy artillery concentration. But there was one more serious attack before this second struggle for Ypres may be considered as abandoned.

The morning of 24th May, after several days of desultory rifle and shell fire, there broke out at 2.45 a bombardment by asphyxiating shells, and gas was liberated before the light breeze on the north-east and east section of the British front from Shell Trap Farm to Hooze. Most of the men were still asleep, and they had no time to put on their respirators before the gas had drifted to them. The gas cloud enveloped the British lines, and was sent out continuously for nearly five hours. Then came a heavy bombardment by shells on the northern and eastern parts of the front, where the British were compelled to give ground. The cavalry bore the attack better than the infantry. Indeed, the extraordinary coolness, courage, and skill of the cavalry throughout their ordeal deserve every praise. Captain the Hon. Julian Grenfell was among those who fell on this day. On the 26th the line, slightly withdrawn, still joining the French at the old place and pressing through Wieltje, was thoroughly consolidated.

So, on a gradual decrescendo, with this outburst upon the 24th and 25th as a sort of last flicker, the second struggle for Ypres came to an end. It was an extraordinary episode in many ways, and a balance-sheet would hardly prove a flattering



document to the Allies. The struggle began, as we suggested, in an attempt to anticipate an Allied offensive. This it did most effectively; but few people in Britain realised at the time how nearly it achieved more. The danger of a salient has already been explained; but this will not explain why alternative lines of defence had not been constructed in the months the salient had been in the hands of the British. Neither will it explain why the trenches were so easily knocked to bits, nor why respirators had not been provided when a clear warning had been given of the Germans' intention. Nor will it explain why the British and French were at such a disadvantage as regards heavy artillery. The Russians were at the very moment suffering from improvidence—though it was not wholly improvidence in their case—as regards secondary lines of defence and heavy artillery; and for a time Dimitrieff, who should have consolidated his position upon the Donajetz, was in disgrace. No one suffered for a similar weakness upon the British front. It is clear that the British lost more than the Germans in these persistent attacks, and although the resources of the Allies were greater, the losses cannot be considered necessary, and they gave them no corresponding advantage.

But the Germans show up much worse. The Channel coast was theirs for the asking for a day or two, and the world saw the spectacle of an army which had produced a breach in its opponent's line without providing the force necessary to take advantage of it. The Germans had not anticipated so complete a success, and before they realised the chance that lay in their hands it had gone, and the best they could do was to secure a small strip of territory.

And one thing is clear. If the struggle for Ypres left a balance of advantages in German hands, it left once more upon the Continent of Europe the record of British heroism and fighting spirit. This small corner of Belgium will be for ever saturated with the memory of the gallantry of all sorts of odd British citizens, drawn from high, low, and middle class homes, who showed to the world that, if they could not win, they could excel in spirit. Before all perils they preserved the same cool, unconquerable front, which has won for the British the name to which they most aspire—of sportsmen who will play a vigorous, strenuous game to their last ounce of energy, and with a will rather to win cleanly than to succeed by unfair devices.

## V. THE DARDANELLES—THE LANDING.

THE attack upon the Dardanelles by the navy alone was abandoned, as we have seen, in the third week in March. It had been entered upon after a careful notification to the enemy. The order for the ten minutes' bombardment on 3rd November had been given by the Admiralty without consulting the War Council, and the Turks needed no ampler advertisement of what was intended. The attack by the fleet alone was decided upon against the direct advice of the First Sea Lord, Fisher, who had stated, in his minute to the Prime Minister, his technical objections.\*

Lord Fisher had allowed himself to be overruled by the War Council, largely by

\* The minute was written on 25th January. He resigned later, rather than agree to a resumption of the attack. He was preparing a great fleet to force its way into the Baltic, and cover a landing of Russian troops in Pomerania. Such an exploit would, if successful, have changed the whole course of the war.

Lord Kitchener, who did not wish the question of military assistance to be raised at a time when he felt it could not be given. The First Sea Lord was further constrained to waive his objections by the consideration that the attack could be broken off at any time, and at the worst could not spell disaster and at the best might achieve success. What we shall never know now is how much might have been achieved by a persistence with the attack. Enver Pasha is reported to have stated that we "could have got to Constantinople," and Dr. Stuermer states that, on 18th March, the German gunners "had quite made up their minds the fleet would ultimately win."\* But on 22nd March, Admirals de Robeck and Wemyss held a Council of War upon *Queen Elizabeth* with Generals Hamilton and Birdwood, and on their representations the attack ceased at the very moment when, if it were ever feasible, it should have been pressed with the utmost vigour.

An occupation of the peninsula must have taken place sooner or later, as Admiral Sir Henry Jackson pointed out in a minute to Admiral Carden on 15th February; and the War Council had no sooner decided upon the naval attack than it began to waver about military support. On 16th February it was decided to send the 29th Division to Lemnos; but it did not actually sail until exactly a month later, three days after General Sir Ian Hamilton had left to take command of the military operations. But the whole campaign seems to have been entered upon too frivolously, and everything was done to make a problem, difficult in any case, almost insuperable. Not only were the naval operations advertised by the November bombardment, the military operations were also foreshadowed in an official French *communiqué* issued on 6th March, almost seven weeks before the troops made their memorable attack.

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The problem of the Dardanelles may be reduced to the securing of the northern shores of the Gallipoli Peninsula at the Narrows. Once they were secured, temporary batteries and the other means of menacing the security of the straits could be cleared with comparative ease. The straits range from two to four miles in breadth; but at the Narrows the distance between the shores is little over a mile. The Gallipoli Peninsula, from its hilly character, is naturally extremely easy to defend and difficult to occupy, though its long coast line and poor communications make it very difficult to prevent a successful landing at some of several points. There is a good landing in Morto Bay, which lies east and north of Sedd-el-Bahr; but Kum Kale would require to be occupied in order to cover a landing, which would be dominated from that point. A force advancing towards the Narrows from Morto Bay would find a strong defensive position in its line of advance at Achi Baba, a plateau lying almost astride the peninsula some five miles from Cape Helles, and rising gradually to about 600 feet. The Narrows have a further obstacle defending them towards the west, the plateau of Pasha Dag, which falls steeply in this direction. It has an advanced line in the heights above the tiny rivulet Soghan Dere. Towards the east and north no such obstacles exist. From Maidos, north of the Narrows, across the peninsula to the headland of Gaba Tepe, stretches some five miles of fairly flat open land. The shores of Gaba Tepe are narrow and rise abruptly in rugged cliffs. As the Narrows are the key to the Dardanelles, so is the plateau of Pasha Dag the key to the Narrows.

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General Sir Ian Hamilton, who was appointed to the supreme military command,

\* *Two War Years seen at Constantinople*, p. 84.





The South End of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the Dardanelles, showing the Landing-places and the Turkish Positions.

had seen service in Afghanistan, India, and Burma, and towards the end of the South African War was Kitchener's Chief of Staff. Of Scotch-Irish descent, he represented a rare compound of impetuous caution. He was sixty-two years of age when he took command of the operations against the Turks in Gallipoli, and he ensured the success of the invasion in the best way possible. Every detail which could be foreseen seems to have been thought out, every smallest operation rehearsed. On his arrival at Lemnos he had found many of his troops lying embarked in Mudros Bay; but as the vessels had been packed for convenience, and without bearing in mind the necessity for making each unit self-sufficient, he sent them back to Egypt to be repacked. At Mudros there were no facilities for unloading. In Egypt the mistake was soon made good, and when the huge liners steamed towards Gallipoli on 23rd April—the day after the gas attack at Ypres—there was no hurry or confusion. The plan was to effect three main landings upon the peninsula itself, while a French Division, under the distinguished General d'Amade, occupied the neighbourhood of Kum Kale to protect a covering force in Morto Bay. A powerful diversion was to be made north of the Cape Gaba Tepe. This position was allotted to the splendid troops contributed by Australia and New Zealand. Farther north, the Naval Division was to make a demonstration, but this, in the result, was reduced to the lighting of flares on the Bulair coast by Lieutenant-Commander Freyberg, of the Hood Battalion, who gallantly swam out at midnight for his daring task.

About 5 P.M. on the 23rd the transports got under way, and, with some 70,000 troops, were sent off to the cheers and band playing of the fleet. To the magnificent troops of the 29th Division and the Anzacs this was the beginning of the great adventure. They steamed with lights out through the following night, and lay off their destination early on Sunday morning, the 25th. Covering forces were first to be put ashore. Their duty was to seize certain positions under the protection of warship fire, and protect the landing of the rest of the troops. A little after four the Anzac troops were nearing the shore at Gaba Tepe, where they were to leave a name which will live in history. At ten minutes to five an alarm light gleamed from the shore. It was not yet light. A few minutes later a little firing was heard, then cheering, and more firing. The first firing had caught the boats as they reached the shore. The Turks were entrenched, and opened a heavy rifle and machine-gun fire; but the Australians leaped from their boats, threw off their packs, and without waiting to load cleared the trenches. The shore carried, a second entrenchment lay among the bushes and footholds of the low sandstone cliffs which lined the beach. These, too, were carried by the splendid troops, who climbed them and cleared the trenches with little difficulty. The cliffs, indeed, were unexpected. In the darkness the boats had gone a little farther north than was intended.

When daylight dawned, Turkish snipers appeared almost everywhere. The ground was scrubby and broken and offered excellent cover. So the disembarking of troops, stores, and ammunition went on under a galling fire, which could not be suppressed. But the covering force had secured the ridge, and apart from sniping, the landing of troops was, therefore, unmolested. As the day grew, a terrible enfilading hail of shrapnel was poured upon the beach from Gaba Tepe, and it was some time before the battleships could put the guns out of action. The problem of supplying the force on the crest with food, drink, and ammunition, and of taking away its wounded, was very difficult. Turkish reinforcements had come up during the day, and General Birdwood, the commander of the force, had to shorten the



line for the night. The troops, however, had matchless spirit. They had, indeed, paid heavily for it. During the day they had tried to advance too far from the shore. Many had been almost surrounded, some ventured into the unknown and were never heard of again. Disdaining discipline, contemptuous of fire, they ventured all at a rush. But in all positions they were cheerful and brave, with a spirit which seemed unconquerable.

The next two days served to establish the Australians and New Zealanders in the positions they had taken up. They dug themselves in under terrible conditions. On the 26th the Turks seem to have made up their minds to drive the invaders into the sea. Great numbers of guns were brought up, and from the warships troops could be seen arriving in great numbers. The odds against the British convey little notion of the unequal character of the struggle; but the warships were watching, and without any disorder each took up a position to cover a certain section of the attacking line. Then a heavy fire of all sorts of shell was poured into the Turks. Shrapnel made showers literally of thousands of bullets over them. Still, the Turks advanced and even tried to shell the ships and snipe their officers. For almost two hours the hail of shell continued; and then with a cheer the men left their entrenchments and put the Turks to flight. In some parts of the line they became demoralised and fell back in disorder; but they kept up a constant fire during the rest of the day. The Anzacs were by now well dug in; and even the reinforcements on the beach and half-way up the cliff secured skilful shelters, which protected them against all but enfilading fire, and that was kept off by the warships shelling any guns which attempted to take up dangerous positions. On the following day the beach and the sea, with its crowds of small boats containing reinforcement and supplies, came in for special treatment, the Turks endeavouring to cut the invaders off from their base. But with strange unconcern the small boats plied to and fro, frequently officered by mere boys, midshipmen just commissioned and young lieutenants. As for the invaders they continued to take their daily baths—in the sea this time—in spite of the rain of shrapnel. One or two Turkish warships were firing across the peninsula; but a few shots from the heavy guns of the British warships drove them off, and the morning of the 28th found the invading troops established beyond any possibility of being dislodged by any force which the Turks were able to bring against them. They had taken root in a triangle not a mile deep and little over a mile and a half at the base.

Meanwhile, somewhat similar scenes had been enacted at the south-western corner of the peninsula, and on the opposite shore in Asia Minor. On Sunday morning, Colonel Casson, with about three-quarters of a battalion of the 2nd South Wales Borderers, landed in Morto Bay (S beach). The ground had been well prepared by a heavy bombardment from the sea, and the first entrenchments of the Turks were easily carried at the point of the bayonet, the vast majority of those left alive bolting. In three hours the invaders had secured the height above the eastern side of the bay. The landing at Sedd-el-Bahr (V beach) was a much more difficult undertaking. The natural defensive qualities of the landing-place were such that it might have seemed impossible to secure a footing. In effect, the situation was something like an amphitheatre. Straight ahead was a natural glacis to a ridge. The shore here was covered with wire entanglements, with machine guns skilfully hidden at convenient points. The ridge was carefully entrenched. To the left it was flanked by a steep cliff, to the right by the fort. To minimise the difficulties

of landing recourse was had to the "Horse of Troy" expedient. A large collier, the *River Clyde*, filled with troops was beached. Lighters were quickly got into position beyond, and over them the 1st Munster Fusiliers, half the 2nd Hampshire Regiment, with a company of the Dublin Fusiliers, streamed from the opened doors which had been cut in the sides of the vessel. The first men, once landed, came under a heavy fire, and ran for the nearest shelter of a sandbank, where they entrenched. The men in the open boats, the covering section, came under an even more terrible fire. A pontoon became detached and Midshipmen Malleson and Drewey swam out with ropes to the lighters, while Commander Unwin leaped into the sea and strove to readjust the connection with the beach. But so heavy was the fire and so great the casualties that it was decided to keep the men in the *River Clyde* until dark. Then another attempt was made to disembark them. It was completely successful and there were no casualties.

While these operations were thus pressed with varying success, another force, part of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers, landed to the west of Sedd-el-Bahr, at Cape Helles (W beach), and carrying the beach defences, wire entanglements and all, at the point of the bayonet, established themselves on the ridge crowning the shore and overlooking Sedd-el-Bahr. There they remained, covering the landing of the rest of the force which came ashore after dark. They were attacked by the Turks in some strength, but, in spite of their lack of guns, drove off the enemy, and the landing after dark was almost without casualties. The next morning, with the Worcester and Essex regiments, and the Royal Fusiliers, who had landed north of Cape Tekke (X beach), they began to work round Sedd-el-Bahr, and the troops on the beach stormed the half mile of glacis, and by the afternoon Sedd-el-Bahr was occupied and the forces had joined. Such an achievement was made possible only by the accurate, continuous, and very deadly fire from the warships, which made the ridge a veritable "inferno." At X beach, while the Fusiliers were working towards W beach, the situation had become precarious; but reinforcements from the King's Own Scottish Borderers and the 1st Inniskilling Fusiliers were landed. In this landing, the brigadier, General W. R. Marshall, who later succeeded Sir Stanley Maude in Mesopotamia, was wounded. About four miles north of X beach part of the King's Own Scottish Borderers and a company of South Wales Borderers with the Plymouth R.N.D. battalion, attempted another landing similar in function to that at S beach. But after a deadly struggle on this (Y) beach, the remnant of the troops were taken off in the early afternoon of the next day. On their right, in a ravine hidden from the sea, the Turks had massed a considerable force, and the British troops were overwhelmed from all sides.

But the south-western corner of the peninsula was now definitely in the hands of the invaders, and reinforcements, horses, stores, guns, and ammunition were landed with impunity. The losses of the British were heavy, but those of the Turks were far heavier. According to Turkish newspapers, the operations in the landings on the peninsula resulted in 10,000 dead and wounded and 3,000 prisoners.

French reinforcements joined the British on the ridge, strengthened the positions, and prepared for the general advance. Another force of French troops, Colonial Infantry, had been landed at Kum Kale, near the plain of Troy, under the guns of the French fleet, on Sunday morning. Their rôle was to protect the landings at Morto Bay and Sedd-el-Bahr. They were but a regiment strong, but Kum Kale was occupied, and the troops marched along the coast to Yeni Shehr. The advance



was hotly contested by superior numbers ; but the French achieved their object, inflicting heavy losses and taking 500 prisoners. The diversion achieved its purpose—the Allied troops had been enabled to make good their footing on the end of the Gallipoli Peninsula, and the French were re-embarked on the night of the 26th, under the fire of the warships. In a week's time the Allied troops were firmly established across the southern end of the peninsula, along the slopes of the first formidable Turkish line of defence, Achi Baba. Their flanks resting on the sea were covered by warships. To the north-west the Australian and New Zealand troops had also established themselves in a position from which they could threaten the Narrows from the north. The operations had not been carried out without heavy loss ; and it was a loss that had not been anticipated, and the wounded had to suffer from lack of preparation to receive them. This had been heaviest on the part of the Anzac troops, who disdained cover, and at times refused to be content with an advance which could be safely maintained. Men of splendid physique and extraordinary daring, they suffered for their lack of discipline, just as the Germans in the West suffered from its excess. The French troops suffered comparatively little loss, owing to their skilful use of cover. The whole operation is one of the most romantic in history, and will ever be ranked among great military achievements.

Meanwhile, a spasmodic shelling of the Narrows' fortifications went on, and mine-sweeping operations under the cover of the warships were continued. But with the landing of troops the whole problem achieved a new orientation, and the military operations became of prime instead of subsidiary importance.

## VI. THE DARDANELLES—THE SECOND PHASE.

THE landing of the troops of the Allied armies at Gallipoli, achieved on April 25, 1915, was one of the most prodigious feats of the war. When the troops were at length entrenched, their position was practically impregnable. The Allied line stretched from the Gulf of Saros, at a point three miles east of Cape Tekke to a point just north of Eski Hissarlik, whence it bent back to the shores of the Dardanelles. The beach, as far as the mountain of Achi Baba, was covered by the guns of the warships. It was now the object of the troops to scale the face of this formidable plateau.

The height of the Achi Baba has been likened to a monstrous idol, looking mockingly down at the men swarming on the plain beneath, and reaching out long arms east and west to the shore. The right arm is represented by a rocky height covered with the thick scrub which had given the Turkish snipers such splendid cover. The right arm was occupied by a general advance of the Allied troops on the 28th April, and formed a base for the attack up the long gentle slope towards the large village of Krithia, whence the ground rises again more steeply to the shoulder of Achi Baba. The road to Krithia cuts the smiling plain into two parts. To the left of the road lay the British, looking towards the right arm of Achi Baba. To the right the French held the greater part of the line, but were supported on their left wing by the troops of the 29th Division. The country across which the Allied line thus stretched was covered with fertile fields and riotous gardens, a wonderland of scent and colour, but dotted over now with the grim signs of war. And here in this far-

flung field the romance of the war was yet even more manifest than on the main fronts. The labels "British" and "French" cover a most romantic medley of troops from the oldest to the youngest nations of the earth. Dusky Sikhs and Gurkhas and Punjabis soon stood there, shoulder to shoulder with English, Scotch, and Irish, and with the splendid specimens of Australian and New Zealand manhood. In the French part of the line there mingled Frenchmen, Algerians, Zouaves, Senegalese, and the men of the Foreign Legion. In this part of the line, too, there was colour as in old-time battles, the khaki being relieved by splashes of red and light and darker blue.

The Allied line had only been achieved by means of tremendous fighting for three days in the face of determined counter-attacks by the Turks. On the night of Wednesday, 28th April, they made a particularly determined attack, advancing in serried rows after the German manner, and falling row after row before the deadly fire from the Allied trenches.

The German officers who commanded the Turks had issued an official address urging them to "attack the enemy with the bayonet and utterly destroy him." Bravely enough the Turks strove to obey, but they failed utterly and lost great numbers of men. They had been largely reinforced by troops from Adrianople and Asia Minor, but the policy of the German officers made of them a holocaust. Time after time they broke against the Allied line, leaving heaps of dead and wounded behind as they were hurled back. Early on 1st May a very violent general attack was delivered by some 18,000 Turks, and a three days' battle began. Both French and British had been by this time reinforced. The Turks advanced in three lines, crawling forward under cover of the fire from their artillery, until the signal should be given for them to start to their feet and make the final charge. The faith of the officers in the German ideal, if not any great consideration for the men, was shown by the fact that the first line was not provided with ammunition, so that the men had no choice but to close with the bayonet.

The troops drawn up to meet this terrific attack consisted on the British side of the 87th, 86th, and 88th Brigades, counting from left to right. With them operated a French Division, with the Senegalese in front. The brunt of the bombardment was borne by the 86th Brigade; and when the enemy charged a gap was made and some trenches occupied. But the 5th Royal Scots, the only Territorial battalion in the 29th Division, charged from the left and cleared the trenches at the point of the bayonet.

The brunt of the attack then fell upon the Senegalese, who lost some ground, but were supported by some British gunners and the 4th Worcesters. A battalion of the Naval Division also went to the support of the French right. In a counter-attack at dawn the left and centre charged forward, gaining a stretch of ground 500 yards wide, but subsequently they had to fall back owing to the French right being checked by barbed wire. On the following night another attack was made and repulsed. The Anzacs made a gallant attempt to seize Gaba Tepe on 4th May, and so clear their flank; but the attack failed. The official casualty list put the losses at this point at 13,979, of which number 2,167 were dead and 3,593 missing.

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The Allies were busy preparing for a new offensive. This began on the morning of the 6th May, and the three days' battle which followed has been variously described as the Battle of Achi Baba, the Second Battle of Krithia, and the Battle



of the Nations. On the extreme left of the Allied line was the 87th Brigade, occupying the hollow there and the height above. Next came the 88th Brigade, and then a Naval Brigade, the Plymouth and Drake Battalions. To the right of this was the French line, stretching away to the Dardanelles shore. The 86th Brigade was now in reserve, as well as the 29th Indian Brigade, a brigade of Anzacs detached from these still holding Gaba Tepe, and the East Lancashire Territorial Division. The battleships and cruisers stood off close to the shore on both flanks with guns in position to play upon the enemy.

Nowhere has the co-operation between army and navy been more admirably worked than in the fight for the Dardanelles. The work of landing troops, ammunition, and supplies fell, of course, to the navy; but the actual support it has given in the fighting is a more remarkable feature. To the navy fell the work of protecting the flanks of the Allied line, and the great guns of the battleships did invaluable work against the enemy's artillery.

The aim of the offensive, which began on 6th May, was to win the height of Achi Baba, but the immediate purpose was to gain possession first of the two great arms which jutted forth from it and encircled the plain. As in the historic type of battle a spectator could envisage the whole field, noting with the aid of glasses the movement of every unit.

The plan was that the French should begin the attack, as otherwise the enfilading process against the British line would have been repeated by the Turkish left. The first day's fighting was confined to the French part of the line. The battle opened with the firing of the French "75" guns from Sedd-el-Bahr, bombarding the right arm of Achi Baba and the broken country below it towards the Krithia road. Simultaneously there went on a bombardment of the upper slopes of Achi Baba and the Turkish trenches in the valley of the Kereves stream by the great guns of *Agamemnon* and other battleships in the Dardanelles. After half an hour's bombardment the Senegalese began to advance in open formation, their artillery covering their advance with great brilliancy and precision, throwing a curtain of shrapnel exactly fifty yards in front of them. A curious feature of the battle was that the Allied troops were advancing against an invisible enemy. The Turk has a genius for taking cover.

It was found afterwards that the enemy had dug their trenches exceedingly deep and narrow, a fact which saved them from the full effects of the extraordinary bombardment. Though no reply was made to the artillery attack, the Turkish infantry made a splendid resistance with their rifles from the trenches in which they lay hidden on the hill's crest. Time after time the Senegalese advanced to the attack, always to be driven back by a perfect rain of bullets. The French left was reinforced by part of the Naval Brigade, while a section of the first line wheeled to the left, moving forward to the Maidos road, but only to be held up again by concealed trenches. The guns from the battleships rained shells and shrapnel on the position, but with little effect. At last the Senegalese were ordered to the second line, and their places taken with no better success by French infantry. By about 5 P.M. the attack had spent itself. The French had pushed forward a mile and maintained their position in face of the Turkish counter-attack between 10 P.M. and 2 A.M. A curious feature of the day's fighting was the silence of the Turkish artillery, either from shortage of ammunition or the fear of betraying their whereabouts.

On the second day of the battle both parts of the Allied line were heavily engaged. The attack opened at 10 o'clock, when the battleships began a bombardment of the Turkish right. Following a quarter of an hour's furious bombardment, after which it seemed incredible that any living thing could remain, the British began their advance. The 87th and 88th Brigades pressed forward towards the slopes between Krithia and the sea, and the Naval Battalions towards the village of Krithia. Immediately the British infantry emerged from the trenches the Turks, from their hidden shelters, began a withering fire, but the troops advanced in spite of it. In the afternoon there was a lull on the British front, though at about 5 P.M. a second, but again unsuccessful, attempt was made to win the hill between Krithia and the sea, but a good advance had been made as a result of the day's fighting. On the left the men were strongly entrenched some 800 yards from the village of Krithia.

Meanwhile, the fighting at the French end of the line had been severe. They began their attack at midday, and with the Naval Division on their left pushed well forward over the ground they had tried to carry on the previous day. The Turks met the advance with so terrific a hail of shrapnel that the line broke. The French trenches on the crest were lost and won again. When night fell the French were still holding the ground they had won against a terrific fire from the Turks. The second day's fighting served to emphasise once more the redoubtable character of the Turks as an enemy when officered by the Germans. Their cleverness in hiding their trenches was due to their own particular instinct; but the masterly use of their artillery was a triumph of leadership. It was carefully husbanded except when it was necessary to check a forward movement, and then it was used with a well-calculated prodigality and admirable accuracy.

At 10 o'clock on the morning of the 8th May the third and most violent day's fighting in this great battle opened. The attack began once more with a terrific bombardment of the Turkish right by the guns from the ships in the Gulf of Saros. The 87th and 88th Brigades on the left and left centre of the British line attacked after half an hour's bombardment, and pushed forward across the broken country between Krithia and the sea in spite of terrible rifle and machine-gun fire. A whole Turkish trench was taken and desperate hand-to-hand fighting went on all morning among the thick scrub. The British advanced across the plain to this attack in successive lines in open formation, a method which allowed the enemy's shrapnel the minimum of effect. The 86th Brigade and the Australians and New Zealanders moved up in this way to strengthen the line for a final assault. In the afternoon there was a lull in the fighting—the French part of the line had been quiet all day—but there was a feeling of expectancy in the air. Then at 5.15 P.M. there suddenly burst forth from the ships and the shore batteries such a terrific roar of guns as had probably not been heard on any front since the war began. An eye-witness states that the whole country had the appearance of having been set on fire.

A quarter of an hour of this stupendous bombardment preceded the final attack of the great three days' battle. But the new attack, in which the whole line seemed to spring forward by one impulse, was met by the same deadly fire as before. The New Zealanders pressed onward to the front, as had been arranged, through the 88th Brigade, but many men of the brigade refused to give place and were borne onward in the rush. An entire Turkish trench was taken at a rush, line after line



pressing steadily forward to the charge. To the right the Australians advanced against a terrible front fire and a fusillade across much more open country. By prodigious deeds of heroism a few hundred yards were won. When it was seen that it was hopeless to storm Krithia the troops did not return to their trenches, but lay down for cover where they were and dug themselves in.

The French had, meanwhile, made a similar small advance, seizing the front trenches of the enemy by the most desperate hand-to-hand fighting. The Turks, indeed, won back some of the ground thus gained, but lost it again before the end of the day's fighting. But the three days' battle had come to an end without the main object of the Allies being realised. It had taught the Staff the enormous difficulty of winning such a position as the height of Achi Baba when fortified with such skill and defended with such valour. But the Turkish counter-attacks failed to recover the lost ground. The 29th Division were now withdrawn into reserve. They had lost 11,000 men and 400 officers, but they had won an undying name. The East Lancashire (42nd) Division took its place.

The attempts to reach Krithia had largely been foiled by the Turkish positions on the high cliff overlooking the gully beyond the Y beach. On the cliff the Turks had constructed a strong redoubt. After one unsuccessful attempt the Gurkhas succeeded in scaling the cliff on 12th May, and the success added a most important strengthening to the Allied left.

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The next vivid movement in the Dardanelles fighting came later in the month, when General Liman von Sanders made a desperate attack on the Anzacs at Gaba Tepe, in the vain hope of fulfilling his threat to "drive the British army into the sea." It will be remembered with what marvellous determination and courage the men had scaled the rocky cliffs on the coast here to win this position: "The most remarkable climb in the history of war since Wolfe stormed the heights of Quebec." The position once gained was of splendid strength and vantage. It consisted of two parallel semicircles of hills, the outer higher than the inner, and occasionally reaching a height of 600 feet. The now famous "Shrapnel Gully" (with its continuation, "Monash Gully") cuts the position in two, crossing it in a north-easterly direction. The gullies and ridges of this ancient eastern land are now familiar in modern mouths, labelled with the pregnant and vivid names which come hot from the mint when history is in the making. "Dead Man's Ridge," "Bloody Angle," "Hell Spit," such names speak for themselves; "Quinn's Post," "Scott's Point," convey some esoteric force to the men who know the deeds which have been done there. The enemy were entrenched well round the position, often at no greater distance than twenty yards, and "Shrapnel Gully" takes its name from the constant pouring in of shrapnel from the guns. The Anzacs soon had the position as well entrenched and fortified as man could make it. Fine firm roads led from the foreshore right to the front trenches and earthworks, and did much to protect communications from the constant shrapnel and snipers.

The Turks were especially anxious to retrieve this position, as the Anzacs at Gaba Tepe were able to hamper every operation directed against the Allied line in the south of the peninsula. They had to be penned up by a large force, as they were an obvious danger to the Turkish line of communication. It was indeed for this very reason the landing at this spot had been made.

Even during the great three days' battle from the 6th to the 8th May, the Anzacs

at Gaba Tepe were held in play by constant attacks ; but though, as has been seen, they had sent reinforcements to the Krithia front, they were able to hold their own. Then General Liman von Sanders seems to have determined to deal first with these pests before beginning another big offensive in the south.

The attack began at midnight of the 18th May, five new regiments having been brought up from Constantinople, and some troops detached from the defence of Krithia. The Turkish force is said to have amounted to 30,000 officers and men. The battle began with a heavy fire from rifle and machine guns, under cover of which Turkish snipers crept forward, establishing themselves in a close line near the British trenches. They paid for their temerity when the Anzacs advanced to the counter-attack at 3 A.M. Even in the preliminary bombardment the Anzacs losses were not great, as they had learned to keep cover. Then at 5 A.M. the Turkish artillery began a determined bombardment, using 12-inch and 9.2-inch guns, howitzers and field guns. The bombardment was a preliminary to a series of determined attacks by the Turks, who were driven off with great slaughter. Already at 10 A.M. the enemy began to give way, but desultory fighting went on all day. It was officially calculated that the Turks lost 7,000 killed and wounded, while the British casualties were no more than 500. The *moral* of the Anzacs was naturally immensely heightened by this brilliant victory, while the Turks began to dig themselves in more securely in their new positions, prepared to act entirely on the defensive. They had gained not a yard by their attack, and no assault of the scale was delivered again.

The Turks had reason for their depression, for on the 24th, the first day of the armistice requested by them, they buried 3,000 dead.

Meanwhile, at the toe of the peninsula, the British had again pushed forward on the flanks. Then, on the night of the 28th May, there was a double success. The Turks pressed forward and recovered some ground, but were driven back with an estimated loss of 2,000. On the same night the French captured the redoubt on the head of the Kereves Dere, which had held them up in the battle of the 6th to 8th May, and which they had nicknamed "Le Haricot."

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On the 4th June the Allied line made a third great attack on Krithia and Achi Baba. From left to right were drawn up the 29th Indian Brigade, the remains of the 29th Division (the new commander of which, General de Lisle, arrived from France during the battle), the East Lancashire Territorial Division, the Naval Division, and the French 2nd Division. The day was windy and dusty, the sky heavy and dull. The attack opened about an hour before noon with the usual bombardment by the shore batteries and the ships' guns, and the advance began at midday. The Indian Brigade pushed forward with their usual *élan*, and captured two rows of trenches ; but the 29th Division to their right had not such good fortune. They were held up by heavy wire entanglements, which had escaped the artillery. This enabled the enemy to pour in a heavy enfilade fire on the Indians, who were thus forced to retire to their original positions. The remainder of the 29th Division were able to advance 300 yards and establish themselves in this new position. In the centre, the Territorials carried three rows of trenches, the farthest of which advanced the line 600 yards ; but they were forced to fall back as the day advanced to the second row. The Naval Division had much the same luck as the Indians, advancing 300 yards, but being forced to retire by an enfilading fire from



the right, where the French had won again and lost once more "Le Haricot," the redoubt which had already cost them so much. But farther to the right the French were able to make a substantial and permanent advance. At Gaba Tepe the Colonials made a diversion and carried a line of trenches, inflicting great loss on the enemy. As a result of the day's fighting on the main front, two lines of Turkish trenches had been won, and an advance of 500 yards had been made along a length of three miles.

But this third offensive only brought home to the authorities the imperative need of heavy reinforcements in this field of operations if the achievement were to prove successful in its larger purpose. Already at the end of May the casualties among the British troops at the Dardanelles numbered 38,636, a total just in excess of the number of losses during the three years' war in South Africa. But the Allies had held in the peninsula some 130,000 Turkish troops, and had inflicted upon them losses computed at 55,000.

A certain disappointment was also felt in that, at this juncture, it became evident that the advantage of the co-operation of the fleet with the land troops was outweighed by the risks which the ships ran from enemy submarines when stationary or moving slowly—a condition necessary for accurate gunnery in these peculiar conditions. When, in the middle of May, it was known that several of the large submarines recently built by Germany had gone to the Mediterranean, great alarm was felt. Already, on 12th May, a Turkish destroyer had in the darkness of the night torpedoed and sunk the *Goliath*, a battleship built in 1900, 500 men being lost, besides the captain and 19 officers. The incident was depressing; but real consternation was felt at the sinking by an enemy submarine of the *Triumph* on 26th May, and of the *Majestic* the next day. The conditions under which the battleships had to co-operate with the land forces made them particularly vulnerable, and it was felt that it would be foolhardy to risk great ships like the *Queen Elizabeth*.\* She was called home, and the other large battleships were withdrawn. A few older ones remained with some cruisers and a flotilla of destroyers, and the *Humber*, one of the monitors which had helped in the autumn bombardment on the Flanders coast, was also sent to these seas.

As a result of these changes, Sir Ian Hamilton was compelled to transfer his general headquarters from sea to land. The place chosen was on Kephalos Bay, in the island of Imbros, whence the Commander-in-Chief visited Gallipoli several times a week by means of a destroyer. The general outlook of the war had also changed, as the day before the last attack Przemysl had been retaken and the Germans were recovering Galicia. This meant that the projected attack on Constantinople, with a Russian army corps under General Istomine, was abandoned.

Meanwhile, it is to be remembered that British submarines had already done splendid service in these waters. The Turkish communications through the Sea of Marmora to the ports of Gallipoli and Maidos, their only speedy route, had had to be abandoned through their prowess. The Australian submarine AE 2 tried to enter the Sea of Marmora on the 30th April, but was sunk. E 14, under Lieutenant-Commander Edward Courtney Boyle, got into the sea on 27th April, having dived under the mines. Once in she did splendid work, sinking two Turkish gunboats and one large transport. Fast on her heels followed E 11, under Lieutenant-Commander Eric Naismith. The news of her exploits soon spread. A large gunboat,

\* A dummy *Queen Elizabeth* was later sunk by a submarine.

two transports, one communication ship, and three storeships fell her victims ; and she created a widespread sensation when she exploded a torpedo under the walls of Constantinople. Both commanders were awarded the Victoria Cross. The effect of the presence of the submarines in the Sea of Marmora was to force the Turks to rely upon sending their reinforcements and munitions largely across the Narrows. There is no railway between Constantinople and Gallipoli, and the Sea of Marmora had been by far the quickest means of transit. The chances of reducing the Turkish position varied with the cutting of the communications.

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Until near the end of the month nothing of importance happened, except the capture of the Haricot redoubt by the French at sunset on the 21st. It had been contested for a long time and had served the Turks well, for by holding it they had been enabled to keep the Allies south of Kereves Dere. Now, after a long-continued bombardment and three most gallant attacks, it lay in French hands, and the way to further advances was open. General Gouraud followed up this significant success by an action on the 24th, which had the effect of straightening their section of the line by carrying it across Kereves Dere. This reduced the salient which still marked the Allied centre ; but it was still sufficiently pronounced to give cause for some anxiety, and it was determined to carry out another offensive in order to fling forward the left and so straighten the line more fully.

The attack was timed for the 28th June. Its aim was to swing round the left flank ; and the obstacles to such a purpose were the Turkish trenches on both sides of a ravine (Gully Ravine—Saghir Dere) which runs from Gully Beach several miles inland. As the troops had advanced from Sedd-el-Bahr they had marched across this gully, and the sea end was accordingly in their possession. The upper end, in the Turks' hands, was a death-dealing horror, where dead bodies, rubbish, and excreta were shot. About 9 A.M. the bombardment opened from both land and sea. The cruiser *Talbot* and the destroyers *Wolverine* and *Scorpion* enfiladed the Turkish trenches, and the latter had to bear with a heavy shrapnel fire. The land batteries were assisted by French trench mortars, which dropped charges of 30 lb. to 60 lb. of melinite into the enemy trenches. At about 10.30 the guns of ship and field batteries all fired for over twenty minutes, and then the infantry made their advance. The most formidable of the redoubts which strengthened the Turkish entrenchments was Boomerang Fort, on the right side of the gully. It had been the chief obstacle to advance upon the left, and had changed hands time after time. The Border regiment carried it now in their first rush, almost without opposition ; and the King's Own Scottish Borderers, the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and the South Wales Borderers carried the first two lines of trenches between the gully and the sea. On the right side of the gully two lines of trenches fell to the 4th Battalion Royal Scots and the 7th Battalion Royal Scots. Three-quarters of an hour after the first advance another brigade swept forward, and carried the advance, in spite of heavy fire, past the line previously won. They were considerably helped by the skilful barrage by which the artillery kept back the enemy reserves. The Gurkhas, on the extreme left, worked their way along the cliffs to the green knoll, due west of Krithia, which had been fixed as the limit of their objective, and the Lancashire Fusiliers seized and held a position which connected up the positions won. On the right the success was not so great, and several attempts to take the trenches facing Krithia village proved unsuccessful. Formidable attempts were made during the night to retake



the positions. During the 29th no attacks were delivered. On the following night a determined attempt was made to retake the knoll near the coast, but the advance was promptly dealt with by destroyers. The Allies were now left to consolidate their gains. They had secured a mile along the coast, four lines of trenches, about 200 prisoners, three mountain guns, and a large number of small arms. The hundreds of rifles and rounds of ammunition left behind showed signs of the demoralisation or disorganisation behind the Turkish lines of which there were other more significant proofs. A divisional order captured suggested that the Turkish *moral* had sunk very low. It is not usual to hear the Turks accused of cowardice. Still they must have been disheartened at the terrible losses they suffered, and their failure to drive the Allies into the sea.

By the end of June the Allied line had been materially straightened, and curved about the Sedd-el-Bahr Krithia road, the centre being little more than half a mile from Krithia itself. But these successes, great as they were, were really irrelevant. Of more importance was the detention of troops which would otherwise have been thrown against the Suez Canal. There had been a heavy outpouring of the best blood of the Empire on this peninsula. By the end of June the British casualties amounted to 42,434; and on the last day of the month General Gouraud was wounded, and was succeeded by General Baillard, a small, active, humorous veteran of seventy. General Gouraud had succeeded to the command of the French troops on the retirement of General d'Amade on 14th May through ill-health. A cool and skilful tactician, he had won great fame in the Argonne, and was later to figure in the decisive stage of the Allied victory.

What must have been the effect upon the Balkan peoples of this paralysis of Britain and France before the Turk, whom they had decisively beaten? What must Bulgaria have thought, remembering that her victorious armies had in a few weeks swept up to the gates of Constantinople? The Allied Governments seem never to have measured these possibilities. It was known by all students of the Eastern Question that the Balkan generals, mostly German trained, looked upon the triumph of Germany as certain. Short-sighted men, but not more short-sighted than the Allied statesmen, they believed in the machine which Germany had created. And here the Allied statesmen had arranged to give the Balkans an object lesson of seeming impotence. Can there be any wonder that a cynical Bulgaria, with a king committed by sympathy and training to German friendship, looked on and hardened to the wrong side. There was no place for trench warfare here. Unless the position could be carried it should never have been embarked upon. From the beginning until now it had been one long bungle, though marked by deeds of superb heroism, with which the British have ever begemmed their most complete failures.

## VII. THE BATTLE OF THE DONAJETZ-BIALA AND THE RETREAT TO THE SAN.

MEANWHILE, the opening passes of the great duel between the Central Empires and Russia had taken place. The end of the German strategy with regard to Russia was, as we have seen, the handling of her armies in such fashion that her appetite for war would be checked, and she would be compelled to come to terms with Ger-

many. The possibility of such a consummation depended upon the German reading of Russian national psychology. It had this to be said for it, that, even if it were inaccurate, the same German strategy might still achieve an end, not so important to the necessities of the case, it is true, but of great value. A series of successful blows against the Russian armies would tend to immobilise them, to make them incapable of any serious offensive action for some time, during which the bulk of the German armies might be transferred to the Western front, to attempt once more to gain a decision there. This, of course, means that Germany, having gained a decision on the Eastern front, would be free to attempt the same thing in the West until the Allies had been reduced to weariness, if not exhaustion, and were compelled to sue for peace. But it represents a change in the strategy\* which obtained in Germany at the outbreak of the war, since at that time France was to be dealt with first, while Russia was held in check with limited forces.

There is no doubt that such a change did actually take place in the German outlook during the winter months. The fact that the Allies in the West had thrown back the German armies almost from the gates of Paris, and had drawn their lines across to the sea, cheating Germany of the seaboard which she came later to look upon as essential to her military plans, marked a complete failure of the strategy with which she entered the war. The general who had directed the German fortunes at the beginning of the war, Moltke, disappeared in October, through the epidemic of ill-health which seizes upon generals who are unfortunate in their projects or who become distasteful to the ruling powers for one reason or another, and the War Minister, General von Falkenhayn, took his place, with new plans for dealing with Germany's enemies. Germany bided her time, nursed her munitions, and turned her thoughts to plans of gaining such a decision over Russia that, at any rate, all fears of an offensive on the East for some months might rest. Falkenhayn could not resist the lure of the West sufficiently to complete in the following year the discomfiture of Russia, and this fault brought immediate retribution.

Towards the end of winter Austria-Hungary made violent efforts to relieve Przemyśl, but without success, and the fall of that fortress strengthened Russian communications in Galicia, and released a not inconsiderable force for offensive action elsewhere. At the end of March the Russians held the great road pass, the Dukla, and were using it as a fulcrum to throw their line over the Carpathian crests all along the line to the east, so that the way would be open for the deployment of their forces in the Hungarian plain.† They also held a commanding position at the mouth of the Lupkow Pass, and by the end of the first week in April their line lay over the crests for some seventy miles. To the east of the important Uzok Pass the line crossed the Carpathian ridge, and lay among the northern foothills; and all efforts to force it southwards continued unsuccessful. The Uzok Pass became the theatre of violent fighting, and although the fortunes oscillated and the Russians secured local successes, they were unable to secure possession of the pass. Small

\* General Ludendorff was the first to realise that such a change was necessary. When the original plan failed, it was essential to deal with Russia thoroughly. Falkenhayn allowed himself to be persuaded to fight an Eastern campaign, but selected a frontal attack in Galicia in preference to an attack on the northern flank, which Ludendorff favoured. It was this general who saw that the choice would involve a succession of costly frontal attacks and an inconclusive result.

† A criticism of this strategy was later urged by Sukhomlinov, the Russian War Minister, who held that the Grand Duke should have struck against Silesia, contenting himself with a mere active defensive in the Carpathians. But the results would have been much the same.



wooded points had become veritable fortresses, ringed and hedged by barbed wire. Access could be gained to these positions only by wading through deep, soft snow. Under such circumstances, where artillery was of little use, and where it was almost impossible to co-ordinate attacks, the advantages all lay with the defensive ; and at the end of April, as at the beginning, the Austrians held secure possession of the pass. The Russian positions at this point lay *nowhere upon German territory*. In the far north, the line stretched from the district of Shavli due south to the Niemen ; from the left bank of the Niemen it stretched south-east to Mariampol, thence south to a little north and west of Osowiec ; from this point it ran roughly parallel with the East Prussian frontier to Jednorozec, thence south-west about Ciechanow to Plock ; from this point it turned south-east to cross the Bzura and follow the Rawka, south to the Pilica, thence west of Opoczno and Kielce to the Nida ; running along the right or western bank of the Nida and then the right bank of the Donajetz to west of Tarnow, it followed the Biala to the Carpathian foothills ; across the crests of the Carpathians it lay in the Hungarian plain below Bartfeld, thence over the ridge to the west of the Uzok, where it again lay in Galicia ; from the Uzok, about which it made an encircling curve, it ran to about Koziowa, thence south to Rozianka ; from this point it ran east and slightly north, below Stanislaw to the Dniester and along the river to the frontier. With all its bends and curves, salients and re-entrants, it must have been a line of about 1,000 miles—a stupendous line to hold ; and as Mariampol is almost due north of the Uzok, the line made a huge salient about Warsaw and the Vistula through Poland.

About this time, when Russia, in spite of the check at the Uzok Pass, was making an immediate threat to Hungary, the Russian Staff had good cause for thinking the Germans were preparing for a strong counter-offensive to relieve their ally. Apart from the German grand strategy of the war, it was clear that Russia could not be allowed to overrun Hungary, which was to a great extent the granary of the Germanic Allies, without a strong resistance. Further, the German supplies of petrol, without which her motor transport could not move, were so low that Galicia, with its prolific supply, was of prime importance to the Germans. There were, then, immediate and local reasons for anticipating some offensive to relieve the situation in the south of the eastern theatre. The exact position upon which the brunt of the attack would fall could not be known with the same certainty ; but, as we have already pointed out, the critical point of the Russian line lay on that section of it which stretched along the Biala to the Carpathians. The Russians knew that large German forces were being accumulated in Western Galicia ; but they could not gauge the intensity or the character the attack would assume.

General Ivanoff, who was in command on the south-western front, had under his control Evert's 4th Army on the Nida, and the Galician armies. General Dimitrieff's 3rd Army, with some five army corps, held the line between the Vistula and the Carpathians, with Brussiloff's 8th Army on his left. On Brussiloff's left lay Tcherbatcheff's 11th Army. The armies were insufficiently armed in every way. Their guns were insufficient, and those which they possessed were of low calibre. They had insufficient rifles, ammunition, and wire. They had not enough labour or transport. Their alternatives were not to fight or retreat, but to die or retreat.

Such was the state of things when the Germans launched their attack upon 28th April against the Russian lines. The section chosen was that which lay between the Vistula and the Carpathians ; and such was the fury of the attack that Dimitrieff's

lines were broken and the troops fell back in confusion. The jubilant announcements of Berlin placed the number of prisoners taken in this initial onslaught at from 20,000 to 30,000. Then began a period of anxiety in the Allied countries which was not to cease for some months.

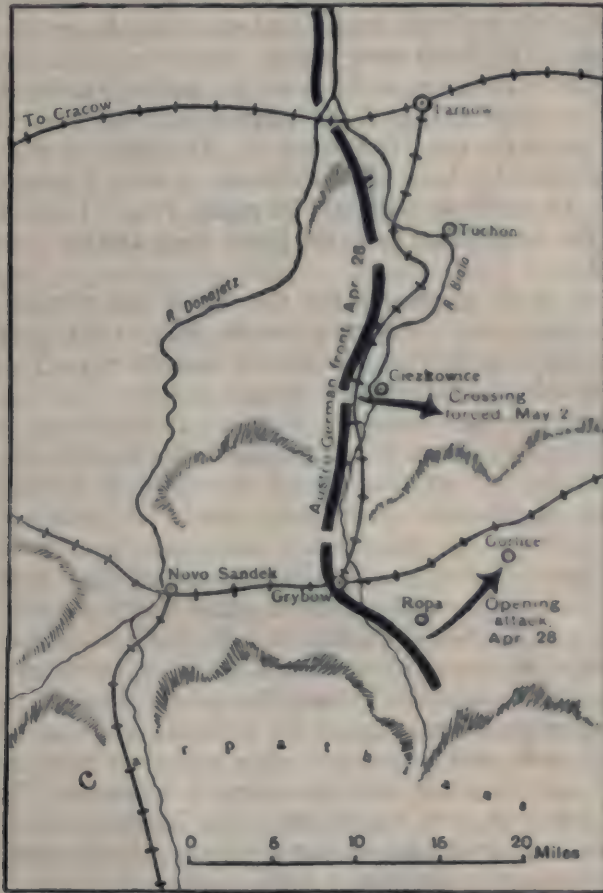
Now it is necessary to examine the causes and the nature of this defeat ; for the Russians had held these positions for nearly five months, and it seems incredible that the Germans and Austrians should not have forced them before if they could have done. If they could not break them before, what was it that caused the difference in this attack in the beginning of May? There is evidence that the attack was most carefully planned. It was placed under the general who, since his success in breaking through the Russian enveloping lines near Lodz, is said to have displaced Hindenburg in the Imperial favour—Mackensen. He had distinguished himself at Gumbinnen, had commanded the 18th Corps which enveloped Samsonov's right at Tannenberg, and it is probable he was the best field officer in the German army. The forces deployed under his direction are reckoned at about 400,000, more than half being Germans ; and the commanders who assisted in the Galician campaign were Linsingen and Bothmer, and those of the Austrian generals who had passed the German weeding-out process—the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, Boehm Ermolli, and Pflanzer. But the numbers and commands give no real impression of the nature of the blow which was suddenly struck at the Russian lines. Profiting by the experience of Neuve Chapelle, the Germans had carefully accumulated an extraordinary mass of guns and ammunition. When the 21st Brigade advanced at mid-day in the Battle of Neuve Chapelle the artillery preparation had disorganised the Germans to such an extent that the men were able to form up in the open with all the security of parade. Not a single shot was fired at them.

The German method has ever been to develop a thing to its logical conclusion, so far as is possible. They had relied from the first upon the moral effect of a heavy bombardment, and were surprised that it produced so little effect upon the British troops. But the bombardments at the beginning of the war were trivial as compared with that of Neuve Chapelle, and this, compared with the terrible shelling on the Donajetz, was as a light shower to a hurricane. The German guns seem to have been arranged in a sort of tier formation. On the short front of the main attack there were some 2,000 pieces of artillery, about half being heavy guns, and the almost incredible number of 700,000 shells was rained in two hours upon the Russians. Many of the German guns were of 12-inch calibre, whereas the Russians had nothing of a greater calibre than 6 inches. A terrible bombardment of this order kept up for days would have broken any lines in the world. The Russian guns, few and badly supplied in any case, broke down in two days, and failed to respond at all. The winter had been a good time for the accumulation of ammunition by the Germans, but the Russians had been almost completely cut off from supplies. Even rifles and rifle ammunition were insufficient. The huge Russian reserves were useless from lack of equipment, and even those heroic troops who were called upon to bear the brunt of the German attack are said to have had no more than thirty rounds apiece.

The main blow was struck at the point where the Russian line had the inevitable weakness of a changing terrain. Towards the small town of Cieczkowice, on the right bank of the Biala, the Russian line left the plain of the Upper Vistula basin, and entered the foothills among which Cieczkowice lies. The hills are on the average



about 400 feet high—not in any sense a serious obstacle or a grave handicap; but southwards the line rose higher, the nature of its defences, therefore, changing with great rapidity. This section of the line, then, was the weakest, and yet it was the pivot of the whole position. The heavy blow which was struck at that position was accompanied by a violent offensive all along the line from the Baltic to Bukovina. But the main force was directed against the Donajetz and Cieszkowice on the Upper Biala, where the attack would develop astride the two main Galician railways so that everything would conduce to preserving its momentum. The advantages



The Breaking of the Donajetz Line.

of selecting such a point for the chief attack were clear. If the Germans could break the line somewhere about Cieszkowice, they would be at once established in the rear of the Russian troops on the Carpathians. The positions on the Carpathians could not be easily evacuated; and if the troops could be taken in reverse, there would result a complete or partial envelopment.

This is what actually happened. The Germans caused a complete debacle in some sections of the Russian line. Of Dimitrieff's army, one corps at least was wiped out; of the three corps who bore the brunt of the attack, only 12,000 men

survived to reach the San a fortnight later. Between 20,000 and 30,000 wounded and unwounded prisoners were taken, and for a few days the western section of the Carpathian line was in a critical state. By 2nd May the enemy had forced the Biala line in various places, and was pressing on past Gorlice. This advance constituted the gravest menace to the Russian forces at the apex of the angle which the line in Galicia made with that crossing the Carpathians. Zboro and Bartfeld, which lay near the apex, are over the Carpathian crests, south and a very little east of Gorlice. The Austrians were, therefore, advancing against the communications of Brussiloff's army in the rear of the troops. The 48th Division, stationed at Zboro, found itself almost enveloped; but, with the utmost coolness and gallantry, fought its way out of the closing ring. The losses were heavy. Transport became disorganised, and the frequent bayonet attacks are evidence not so much of the Russian's love of that weapon and of close fighting as of the lack of ammunition. Only the coolness and skill of Brussiloff saved the army from disaster. The Russians were rapidly brought across the Carpathians, fell back to the Wisloka, another tributary of the Vistula, which leaves the Carpathians near the Polyanka Pass. This retreat involved a withdrawal over the Carpathians up to the Dukla Pass, and the evacuation of a deep pocket in the line.

Within a week of the opening battle the enemy had cleared Hungary of the Russians. The pressure was maintained over the whole front, though with varying success. An attempt to press back the Russian line above the Vistula—a readjustment which had to follow if the retreat in Galicia continued—was punished severely, the enemy being thrown back across the Vistula. Evert's troops were reluctant to retreat, and their counter-attack showed General von Woyrsch that he could take no liberties with them. By 8th May the enemy had forced the line of the Wisloka and penetrated to the Wislok—an advance of nearly thirty miles. Two days later they had forced their way ten miles farther to the east, and lay, therefore, not far from the Upper San. Krosno, on the Wislok, marked their farthest point east; and this fact shows that the main force of the enemy attack was still on the same line as at the beginning of the Galician offensive. Sweeping along on an area between Tuchow and Gorlice, the centre of which is Cieczkowice, the enemy front, if it had advanced equally, should have lain between Czudec and Krosno. But the Russians were recovering from the disorder caused by an attack under such novel conditions when a number of shells were rained upon their lines every hour, which would have sufficed in former wars to break down the strongest fortresses. Towards the south the line perforce fell back more rapidly, since the Carpathian forces were at stake. To the north, with the continuous retreat in Galicia, the Russian lines were withdrawn from the Nida and re-established farther east.

The Upper Wislok proved no efficient bar to the enemy, and on the 11th he had penetrated to the San in the western face of the bend it makes south of Przemyśl. Farther north he was still held up by the Wislok. About the same time the Russians initiated a counter-offensive farther east. Advancing on a front from Czernowitz to Obertyn, they inflicted heavy punishment upon the Austrians, and began that series of counter-attacks in the Dniester region which, with almost wearisome monotony, persisted for nearly a month in taking Austrian prisoners and guns. The losses in the whole Galician theatre were severe; but just as it is possible that in these first days the balance of losses was probably favourable to the Allies in the West, it was possibly favourable to the Russians in the East. The figures



estimating the casualties are, indeed, instructive. The Germans at this point claimed to have taken 140,000 prisoners in the Galician advance. Assuming this figure to have been approximately correct, it refers, in all probability, to the wounded and unwounded. The Germans were concerned to secure as much moral effect as possible, since Italy and the Balkans were still wavering. They therefore included in their accounts not only those who are strictly called prisoners, but also those who, in a rapid retreat, are left wounded on the field.

With the Russian counter-offensive the operations in Galicia took on a new colour. The Germans continued to advance, but their momentum had been reduced so considerably that no longer was the Russian retreat a thing compelled by the enemy. The Russians retreated only when they had exacted the full possible price from the enemy. The counter-offensive in the East was pursued, and on 14th May they captured Kolomea at the same time that the Germans reoccupied Jaroslav. The town was not taken until after a furious struggle. When it was felt that the troops must fall back over the San, a division was entrenched upon the small hills north and west of the town, and resting upon the marshy ground to the north. For two whole days the heroic soldiers held up the attack of Mackensen's advance, and they were only withdrawn across the river when the Russian main army had safely taken up its position on the right bank. The pressure of the advance was further relieved by a counter-attack. In this battle, in which the famous 3rd Caucasian Corps took part, the Russians pushed ahead ten miles, and were withdrawn only when the perilous situation of the rest of the troops had been relieved.

In a fortnight, by means of an extraordinary accumulation of forces, and still more by means of an incredible expenditure of ammunition, the Germans and Austrians had succeeded in advancing a distance of seventy miles, and had forced their way to the river San. The first phase of this great campaign ended with the Germans and Austrians on the river. The momentum of the advance was now reduced to zero, and every step of the further advance was retarded and contested with the utmost vigour. The assailants had at first stolen their advance, then pressed a hard bargain; from the fall of Jaroslav they were compelled to pay in full, and although the Russian retreat caused depression in the minds of the Allies, it was in no sense justified. For the one and only end of war is not the capture of territory but the defeat of the enemy. Advances and retreats have a moral and political significance, but unless the enemy is defeated they mean little. The war, being fought between two groups of opponents, one of which had completely prepared for the conflict, was inevitably a war of attrition. It was inevitable that the Germanic forces should for the whole of the first period of the war exert the pressure. They had for a long time a preponderance in men fully equipped, provided not only with rifles, but heavy guns and ammunition. It follows from this that, since the Allies had a vastly greater number of men and vastly greater resources, losses for Germany were absolute losses, whereas for the Allies they were merely a temporary check. Given the time, they could still put more men into the field. The German position was that a decision must be secured as early as possible, before the Allies had trained and equipped sufficient numbers to make a decision impossible. Hence, although the invasion of Germany would have been vital for Germany, signifying the final collapse of the German forces, the invasion of Russia meant, for the Allies, simply the high premium one pays for unpreparedness in the face of a bellicose and mighty empire. While the Germans and Austrians could be compelled to suffer

losses equal, or nearly equal, to those they inflicted, they were in effect treading the sure path to ultimate defeat, no matter what territory they secured. As we have seen, from various causes they had suffered absolute losses either equal to or greater than those they inflicted on the Western front, and on the Eastern they had lost almost as heavily as the Russians. They were hence compelled to fight on and on in the hope of inflicting a mortal blow. Short of putting a vast proportion of the Russian forces out of action to such an extent that they could not take the offensive for some time, the Germans gained nothing by their strenuous efforts. Such an advance on the Western front would have been a vastly different matter.

The troops pushed on valiantly although their advantages gained were not equal to the Russian advantages lost. In the middle of May the Russian line above the Vistula had fallen back, moving from Kielce to a point a few miles below



From the Donajetz to the San.

Sandomierz. Thence it crossed the triangle formed by the Vistula and the San, along the left bank of which it ran to a little north of Jaroslav, where the Austro-Germans had established themselves on the right bank of the river. Between Jaroslav and Przemysl it crossed the San, ran in front of Przemysl and thence south and east in a line parallel to the Dniester. This line had no natural strength, and the fact that it was held at all proved that the Russians had partly recovered the initiative—that is to say, the power over their actions. This is also shown by another significant series of engagements in Eastern Galicia, by which Tcherbatcheff's army had forced the Austrians from the line of the Dniester, a line long occupied and fortified, to the Pruth. The Russian counter-offensive was directed to relieve the strain in other sections of her line, and also to influence Rumania; but from the nature of the case, since the advance would come up against the most difficult



section of the Carpathians, where they are highest and broadest, if pressed it could not counterbalance or retrieve the reverses in Western Galicia, though it might mitigate the stress of the enemy onset.

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On the 14th of May a significant event had taken place north of the Vistula. The line here had had to fall back to conform to the retreat in Galicia. The Austrians, eager to improve the occasion, pressed on too eagerly to Opatow, which they reached about the evening of the 13th. But there they were checked; and, on the following morning, a counter-attack threw the 25th and 4th Austrian Divisions upon each other by an enveloping movement from north and south, and compelled them to fall back some twelve miles south-west of Opatow to escape irretrievable disaster. A force of Cossacks had even cut the Austrian communications, and the 4th Honved Division was rushed up to retrieve the situation. But it was unable to prevent the Austrians suffering heavy loss, and the German division to the north was next involved on front and flank. A hasty retirement was again necessary. Already Evert's army had inflicted some 20,000 to 30,000 casualties in changing its line. Each of these strokes, right and left of the area of the main enemy attack, is significant as showing the new conditions in which the Russians, having recovered from their first surprise, were fighting.

After crossing the San at Jaroslav the Austro-Germans sought to strengthen their hold upon the right bank of the river; but made headway very slowly, though they had nearly pierced the Russian line again on 17th May. The Russians, with their incomparable power of resistance, held up the advance; and as the stream of ammunition for artillery had run low on the German side, the critical point was passed. The enemy had broadened his holding upon the right bank, but for the moment was securely held. Przemyśl was, by the advance across the San, under the threat of a flank attack from the north. Mackensen now strove to attempt the complete envelopment of the position. A fortress Przemyśl was no longer. The Russians had had no time to rebuild the fortifications, which, between them and the Austrians, had been completely reduced before the fortress fell into Russian hands. The Russians had already decided to rest the fate of the position on their fortunes in the field. It depended upon the lateral railway, which connected it and Lemberg with the Russian bases. The Germans struck a series of heavy blows from the west of Sambor towards this railway. It was not a particularly good area for a strong attack, since the armies were penned in on the right by the marshes of the Dniester. To prevent a great concentration against him in this area Linsingen opened attacks to the east of the marshes, north of Stryj. Though the German advance across the San had carried them as far north as Seniawa and extended some four or five miles eastward along the Lubaczowka (a tributary of the San, midway between Seniawa and Jaroslav), this was not the critical point in the third week in May. It had passed to the district about Hussakow and Lutkow, which lies some twelve miles to the east of Przemyśl and about six to eight miles south of the Przemyśl-Lemberg railway. About this area the struggle oscillated for many days, and the towns changed hands frequently. Hussakow, the more easterly and the nearer the railway, was in Russian hands on the 17th, in German hands on the following day, and had reverted to the Russians on the 19th. The enemy were more successful at Lutkow. Przemyśl now made a dangerous salient to the west, and the German lines were straightly drawn about it to the north and south. It

was subjected to an almost continuous bombardment, while the main effort was being made to cut the neck of the salient, capture the position with its defenders, and break the Russian lines.

Though opinion was in suspense in the Allied countries, people now began to breathe a little more freely. The extraordinary series of successes during the first fortnight of May, which carried the enemy to the gates of Przemyśl, had caused much depression, and this would have been accentuated if it had been known that a complete breach of the Russian lines had on several occasions been simply a question of hours. Now, as the succeeding fortnight showed a determined stand at Przemyśl—a stand which in so dangerous a position meant much—and as the successes seemed fairly even, hope began to dawn once more. This was fanned by distant Russian rebuffs to German moves in the Baltic provinces. A few days later they inflicted another check upon the Austrians on the Dniester, capturing between 2,000 and 3,000 prisoners. The situation about Przemyśl became more interesting as it became more critical. Below Jaroslav the Germans succeeded in pushing their line south to take in Radymo; and after fierce fighting, in which the Germans used asphyxiating bombs, and villages changed hands time after time, their grip was extended to take in Naklo, which is about six miles north of the railway line as Hussakow is south. At Naklo the assailants were held again; but the railway could now be commanded by artillery both from north and south.

On 28th May a skilful counter-attack was made by the Russians against Seniawa. The town was retaken, and the Austro-Germans were thrown across the San, with a loss of some 7,000 prisoners. The Russians then forced their way across the Lubaczowka and threatened to squeeze the enemy out of Jaroslav also.

About the same time fighting increased in intensity over the whole Eastern front. A heavy bombardment was opened against the Russian lines north of the Pilitza, and fierce attacks, under cover of asphyxiating gases, were hurled again and again against the lower Rawka front. The fumes of the gases were perceptible about twenty miles, but the Russians by vigorous counter-attacks retrieved the situation. In a fortnight they had taken some 9,000 prisoners. In Eastern Galicia, at Stryj, the Germans also attacked with great violence. Farther east, in the district about the streams Swica and Lomnica, which enter the Dniester at Zurawno and Halicz respectively, the Russians assumed the offensive with such success that the Austrians were driven to retreat in disorder, and a large capture of prisoners and material was made. On two days the prisoners amounted to 16,422 rank and file and 238 officers.

Meanwhile the pressure was kept up against the Przemyśl fortifications, and there some of the most furious fighting of the campaign took place. The Russian successes north and south were not sufficient to cause any relaxation upon this the crucial point. Before Stryj the enemy had only been brought to a standstill at the barbed wire defences. About Przemyśl a violent fire was kept up for several days. On the north-western section of the fortifications the Bavarians forced their way to within 200 yards of the defences before being brought to a halt. During the night of 30th–31st May the assailants even penetrated into Fort 7, and terrible hand-to-hand fighting took place for nearly twelve hours, at the end of which time the only German troops left in the fort, 600 rank and file with 23 officers, were prisoners. On 31st May, later in the day, some of the northern forts seem to have been secured by the Bavarians, but they were not held without great loss.



Preceding the final attack a heavy bombardment by guns up to 12-inch calibre was maintained against Forts 10 and 11 ; and the Germans' success was due to the same factor which had assured the success of his reconquest of Western Galicia—the lack of ammunition on the Russian side. The gunners fought the position till the failing shells enabled the Germans to approach ; and they had penetrated to the very muzzles of the guns when the heroic gunners placed their last shell in the breach and fired. During the night of 2nd June the fighting, which had worked up to a climax of fury, went finally against the Russians ; and the Bavarians entered Przemyśl from the north and the Austrians from the west and south.

Thus Przemyśl changed hands once more ; but it fell to direct assault. The Austro-German attempt to cut across the neck of the salient had completely failed. It is almost impossible to suggest the prodigies of valour performed by the splendid Russian soldiery, who for a fortnight had held this dismantled fortress under continual attack, under the heaviest shell, under asphyxiating bombs, and under the growing threat of envelopment in their rear. Jubilant Berlin and Vienna, to cover the failure of their main objective—the breaking of the Russian line and the defeat of the field armies—issued bulletins which in almost the same language announced that “ the booty cannot yet be ascertained.” It should not have taken them long, and the waiting populace never learned, though it may have guessed, that there was no booty. No guns that were not rendered useless, no ammunition for the best of reasons, no ammunition wagons, no locomotives—nothing, in fact, was left by the Russians but the bare shell, which they could not remove. Tremendous expenditure of ammunition, huge loss of life—these were the purchase money of the place where the fortress of Przemyśl had been. It had taken a fortnight to reach the San. It took three weeks to pass it. When we remember how badly the Russians were equipped for the conditions of modern warfare, we must count the second phase of the great campaign a wonderful achievement for them.

## VIII. THE ALLIED SPRING OFFENSIVE.

WHEN the attacks upon Ypres were wearing themselves out, the offensive which they were designed to anticipate and disguise was beginning farther south. As we have seen, General Joffre had during the winter secured a number of vantage points for initiating an offensive at any selected moment. One of these was Vermelles, south of La Bassée, and this stronghold had been approached even more closely north and south. Its importance was that it was, in effect, an outer work of the great railway junction, Lille, towards which the Allies naturally looked with intense interest and desire. It was often thought, during the long months of siege warfare, that the whole fortified system which Germany had created from the North Sea to the borders of Switzerland would have to be contested and won yard by yard and mile by mile. Such a view had been shown to be wholly false time after time, and the course of the war on the Eastern front was demonstrating its falsity at this moment. The position of an army in positional warfare is a sort of network of stitchery, which must fall to pieces by *block* if certain stitches are cut. An army's security depends upon its communications. These are the life lines which keep it in being ; and certain centres are the foci from which the living fluid radiates.

Lille was one of these centres, for all the main railway communications between Flanders and France passed through it; and hence, Lille taken, the armies in Flanders would have been cut off from those in France, unless the Germans fell back to another mesh of the French railway system. It could never be so good as that which centred in Lille, but it would not be hopeless. Lille, however, was the Manchester of France, the centre of its most highly developed manufacturing region. This made it an object of great sentimental, political, and material interest; but its chief value, in the eyes of the Allied Command, was its rôle as a centre of communications.

Towards Lille many of the thoughts and plans of Sir John French were directed. The operations of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle were aimed at Lille, though they fell so far short of securing it or even weakening its position. The movements which represent the British part of the Allied offensive again looked to Lille; but the French, while they regarded Lens, which is a sort of outpost of Lille, more immediately aimed at a much more ambitious objective—nothing less than Douai and Valenciennes. A blow of such a character would jeopardise the communications of all the armies of the Compiègne salient to such an extent that it would be impossible to avoid a great retreat. If the French advance carried them to Douai, Lille would be the pivot to which the shaken German armies would cling. A blow towards Lille in such circumstances would directly further the effect of the thrust towards Douai.

The French had at one time decided to direct their offensive through Lorraine. The spring saw bitter fighting at many points on the eastern sector of the Allied Western front. In Upper Alsace, Hartmannsweilerkopf, which had been seized in January by the Germans, was retaken by the French, and became the centre of a two months' struggle. Farther north the spur overlooking Metzeral was captured, but the attempt to push towards Colmar was contested foot by foot and made little progress. The sides of the St. Mihiel salient were pushed in slightly, and this operation, opened by the brilliant capture of the plateau of Les Eparges on the north side, became merged in an advance in the Wœuvre.\* But a great Lorraine offensive, which these movements seemed to presage, would not have brought sufficient pressure to bear on Germany immediately, and the great campaign against Russia induced the Western Allies to turn to the area where a comparatively small advance would be of decisive value. The French Command had now been changed. Castelnau went to direct the operations between Compiègne and Verdun, Pétain taking his place as Commander of the 7th Army between the Somme and the Oise. D'Urbal went from Flanders to command the 10th Army in the Artois.

**Aubers Ridge.**—The British operations began upon Sunday, 9th May, and at a heavy cost achieved little result, except to detain in the area troops which might otherwise have gone to the Artois. The 1st Army advanced between Bois Grenier and Festubert, a strip of country having Neuve Chapelle a little south of its centre. Bois Grenier is a village which lies about two miles south of Armentières and six miles north-east of Neuve Chapelle; and Festubert is some three miles west, and slightly north of La Bassée and about one and a half miles north of the La Bassée Canal. The front of the advance measured some ten miles, and it faced south-east. The airmen were sent out to bombard the various centres from which support might

\* These movements on the Eastern frontiers gained little, and were terribly costly in life. The three operations are reported to have cost the French over 60,000 casualties.



be sent, and this part of the offensive was skilfully carried out. The infantry attack had as its immediate objective the Aubers Ridge, and three corps were employed. The 4th marched towards Fromelles, and the 1st and the Indian Corps were in action farther south. The bombardment began at 5 A.M., and half an hour later the 8th Division of the 4th Corps advanced and captured the first line of German trenches about Rouges Bancs; but although the troops somewhat extended their hold, it was soon found that the defences had not been sufficiently weakened by the bombardment, and the men were held up by barbed wire. No progress could be made; and the same fortune met the attempts to advance on the following day. Not only this; it was now seen that, under the skilful manipulation of the German machine guns on the flanks, it was impossible to hold what had been won, and the 4th Corps were withdrawn to the original positions. It was the same with the attacks farther south; and such being the case, Sir John French sanctioned the proposal of Sir Douglas Haig, who was in command, to abandon the northern attack and concentrate all energies on the southern. Yet although the action proved unprofitable,\* the days were marked by many heroic incidents, one indeed, in the words of the general officer commanding the corps, "a feat of arms surpassed by no battalion in the great war." This was the action of a Territorial battalion, the 13th Kensington. They carried, on the British left, three German lines of entrenchment and held on until ordered to retire. The reinforcements sent to help them were mown down, and the battalion got just before dark into the British lines again. The record of the experiences of this splendid Territorial battalion, cut off from all help, enfiladed by machine guns, and the mark for artillery bombardment, is as thrilling as any we know. Of the 700 men who went into the battle but 267 came out unhurt.

The Allies fought in these battles with an added bitterness. On 7th May, the *Lusitania* was torpedoed off the south-west coast of Ireland, and 1,198 men, women, and children were drowned. The Germans seemed to be anxious to put behind them all thought of humanity, and this horrible murder was commemorated on a specially struck medal. Men who had fresh in their memory the gas attack at Ypres heard the news of the latest outrage with deepened anger, and it may be that in this we find the explanation of the small number of prisoners.

**Festubert.**—The second advance did not take place for a week. It had been timed for the 12th; but in modern battles artillery is of so much importance that a misty day can postpone, or render ineffective, the most skilfully planned operations. It was this which determined Sir John French to put off the second attack until the night of the 15th, when the darkness would give some immunity against the German fire. The bombardment went on for some hours preparatory to the advance, which was made just before midnight. The area of attack was much smaller than that selected for the advance of 9th May. Below Neuve Chapelle the German front projected into the British lines, making a salient; and the attack aimed at reducing the salient entirely or in part. The attack was carried out by the Indians advan-

\* According to a special report in the *Times*, the first advance was completely and extraordinarily successful, giving the British the villages of Fromelles and Aubers, a footing on the Aubers Ridge, and leaving a gap by which some detachments penetrated almost to Haubourdin, the south-western suburb of Lille. The cause of the failure to hold these gains is still obscure. It was attributed to the right flank of the attack having insufficient high-explosive shell to prepare its advance thoroughly, the Germans being, therefore, free to deal with the isolated advance of the left. But it is too easy to fall back upon a shortage of shell. It would be more just to blame the allocation of shell or the ranging.

cing from Richebourg l'Avoué, and the 22nd Brigade marching from the neighbourhood of Festubert, almost due east. The Indian Corps was unable to make headway owing to the highly fortified state of the German line on the left. There were numerous works and redoubts, which could only be reduced by heavy artillery. The position was so obvious that Sir Douglas Haig at length ordered the Indian Corps to act as a defensive flank. In the centre and on the right the advance was successful in capturing some of the German trenches. The centre on Sunday morning made an advance of between one and two miles from the Rue du Bois. The 22nd Brigade (7th Division), under General Lawford, made the most significant advance, reaching a critical point of the German defence near the Rue d'Ouvvert. The remainder of the day was spent in trying to consolidate the gains, by reducing the German works which remained intact between the new fronts of the centre and the right. But the work had not succeeded when night fell, and the British guns took up the work of battering the German supporting trenches.

About 200 prisoners had been taken, and of these half fell to the gallantry of Company Sergeant-Major Barter, of the 1st Welsh Fusiliers. The battalion formed part of the command of General Lawford. After having carried the first trench line on the right, Barter went forward with eight volunteers and cleared over a quarter of a mile of trenches farther ahead, capturing 3 officers and 102 men. He was awarded the V.C. Against this gain of men must be set the loss of a company of the 2nd Scots Guards, who got ahead too quickly and were cut off. Such incidents are inevitable when large numbers of men are set to advance against positions of this kind.

The attack was resumed at daybreak on the 17th, and again the offensive was successful at the beginning; indeed, one success was most important. The British advanced line had been separated by several highly fortified works; but these were reduced by midday, and the lines could thus be consolidated. The greatest advance upon this day was made by the 21st Brigade upon the right, and one of the battalions found itself, like the 2nd Scots Guards the day before, so far ahead of the line that they must either be surrounded or retire. They had advanced in the evening, and found across their path a deep ditch too broad to be jumped. The men of the 4th Camerons, a Territorial battalion of Gaels from Skye and Inverness, were not to be held back by such an obstacle; and though the German artillery was making good play, they swam, or crossed the ditch on planks. One company met the fate of the 2nd Scots Guards—it was wiped out. But another continued the advance, and took the trench which had been their objective. It was a communication trench, and the Germans, after their first surprise, began to attack from both sides. The company was isolated; it had no bombs to clear the trenches, and not even a machine gun. An officer, who went with two men to report the state of affairs to headquarters, found the telephone out of order, and it was resolved that the company must retire. Some of the men slid down over the high parapet of the trench; many pulled up the flooring boards of the trench and crawled out of the space beneath. Only a small portion of the gallant battalion regained the British lines.

The following day was misty and wet, and not much could be done, though progress was made in the afternoon and evening in the centre. Its extent was not great, but its position gave it a certain importance. On the 19th the Canadian and 51st Highland Division replaced those which had borne the brunt of the offensive.



The advance was pushed ahead, especially by the Canadians on the right ; and later in the month the 2nd London (Territorial) Division took other enemy trenches. But the offensive had gone its course, and Sir John French, on the 26th, told Sir Douglas Haig to diminish his artillery bombardment, and to strengthen and consolidate the ground he had won.

In one of the later advances the men found 80 corpses of men belonging to the company of the 2nd Scots Guards which had been cut off almost at the beginning of the Battle of Festubert. Around them lay the dead bodies of those whom the Scots had killed as the price of their own lives, and all around the grass was cut up in the terrible death struggle. There is one other episode which will probably be remembered for its significance apart from the emotional atmosphere it engendered. A battalion of Saxons, whose numbers had been thinned out, determined to surrender *en masse*, and walked towards the British lines. The men, not knowing the meaning of the operation, continued to fire upon the Saxons. These then threw down their rifles, put up their hands, and one hoisted a white flag. Their ordeal was not yet over ; for the Prussians to the right, seeing what the manœuvre meant, began to fire upon the Saxons, and the artillery from behind threw shells into them with deadly accuracy. It was a striking object lesson to the British soldiers to see a mass of enemy soldiery trying to save their lives by surrender, and losing them through the deliberate fire of their own army.

The series of engagements which Sir John French calls the Battle of Festubert—a title which ignores the unsuccessful movement towards Fromelles—was not without valuable results. The British commander thus records them : “ The enemy was driven from a position which was strongly entrenched and fortified, and ground was won on a front of four miles to an average depth of 600 yards. The enemy is known to have suffered very heavy losses, and in the course of the battle 785 prisoners and 10 machine guns were captured. A number of machine guns were also destroyed by fire.” A considerable quantity of material and equipment also fell into British hands. But we cannot think the gains commensurate with the cost.

**The Artois.**—Meanwhile, much more important operations had been in progress farther south. The country between Arras and La Bassée is a crumpled chalky land, with villages and hamlets lying in its hollows. It is divided roughly into halves by the town of Lens. The northern half is much lower than the plateau-like contour of the southern. About two-thirds of the distance between Arras and Lens runs the ridge of Notre Dame de Lorette. Below it, in a depression at its western extremity, was the small town of Ablain St. Nazaire ; and farther south, almost midway between Lens and Arras, in another depression, lay Carency. Taking Ablain and Carency as the points of the base of an equilateral triangle, the town of Souchez, lying eastward astride the Bethune-Arras main road, stood at the apex. La Targette was a small town at the next crossing of the main highroad. Eastward lay the heights of Vimy ; south lay the fortified barrier called the Labyrinth. General Foch, the commander of the northern group of armies, exercised a special supervision of the offensive here, and he could hardly have had a more difficult problem to deal with. In the numerous townlets with their scattered mean little dwellings, with wooded patches here and there and numerous spurs and escarpments, the country could be defended with great ease and only won at a high cost. The Germans had developed a system of fortification under which even a tiny patch of country tended to be the field of fire of numbers of small works crowded with machine

guns. The works were so numerous that, unless all were known and severally destroyed by bombardment, the trenches became merely their first and outer line of defence. This fallen, the forts behind, or some of them, still remained, and were capable of holding up even the most formidable advance unless artillery with high-explosive shell formed part of it. The line of trenches served in part as a screen ;



The Battle of the Artois.

and for the rest, such works, converted farmhouses loopholed and strengthened with sandbags for the most part, were hidden with care, and when discovered were almost impregnable.

The German front, at the opening of the French offensive, bulged to the west about Lens. It ran from west of Loos to slightly west of Ecurie on the La Bassée-



Arras road. But between these two points, which are in an almost exact north and south line, the German front threw a wide loop to the west. From west of Loos it ran to the east of Aix Noulette, about Ablain, Carency, and La Targette to the western outskirts of Ecurie. Ablain was the head of the salient, but the crest of Notre Dame de Lorette with its Chapel of Our Lady, slightly north of Ablain, was its fortified escarpment. The salient was a protective covering of Lens, the importance of which we have already seen. General d'Urbal, in immediate charge of the army of attack, the 10th, at the beginning of the offensive had under his command nearly 300,000 men. About 1,000 guns of all calibres had been accumulated, and indeed d'Urbal was so well supplied that he could afford to lend Sir John French three groups of 75's—a most useful addition to the British attack. Buelow, the German commander, seems to have had his army similarly reinforced, in view of the French offensive; and Bavarians, Saxons, and Badenians were found among the prisoners. But even with the reinforcements, his command was inferior in numbers and guns, though its positions might almost have been described as impregnable. That they were not the French speedily proved.

The attack began at the same time as the first abortive British attack farther north; and however ill-managed and ill-directed the latter was, it had the effect of attracting to it a sufficient number of those who would otherwise have collected against the French to enable their advance to make rapid progress at one or two important points. But the French advance was prepared by the most terrible bombardment the Western front had yet experienced. Neuve Chapelle had proved that no trenches, no works, could resist a sufficiently sustained artillery fire; and Mackensen had but recently proved this over again in the East, where the line on the Donajetz had fallen to the assault of his massed guns. The French had grappled more quickly than the British with the problem of munitions, and had by this time a considerable mass of heavy artillery and high-explosive shell. Very early on that Sunday morning the French guns began to batter to pieces the whole of the southwestern section of the Lens salient from Carency to La Targette. Under the bombardment everything crumbled to dust and debris; and when the infantry advanced, with their splendid *élan*, at about 10 o'clock, they went past La Targette, the cross-roads sentinel, and stormed the western half of Neuville St. Vaast. On their left the French swept like a wave across the Arras-Bethune road, leaving Carency behind on their left rear. The entrenchments between Carency and La Targette—the “white works” as they were called, from the material out of which they were made—were no more, and the French had passed over them. Carency held out the whole day, though the first French rush had carried them into the outskirts. The French had passed it towards the east, and practically invested it upon three sides. To the north the German line was still holding firm. At the end of the day the French had taken 3,000 prisoners, 10 field and 50 machine guns, and had advanced, on a front of between four and five miles, to a depth of two and a half miles on the right, though much less on the left.

On the Monday the attack was resumed. Trenches were captured in the north towards Loos, and the Chapel of Our Lady on Notre Dame de Lorette was cut off from the south and east. Elsewhere they consolidated their first gains, and secured a firmer hold upon Neuville St. Vaast. The whole front was the scene of more violent attacks on the following day, when Carency was bombarded with the utmost persistence and vigour. It was slowly being battered to bits, and on Wednesday

it was carried, the remains of the garrison—about 1,000—surrendering. The same day the French carried the crest of Notre Dame de Lorette with the fortified Chapel of Our Lady. It had resisted the French attacks for months, and it fell now to that final limit of endurance which the French exhibited. The besiegers held their posts under the most terrible sufferings. Shells fell everywhere about them. They were cut off, and for a whole day were left foodless. A heavier shell than usual would engulf them, and they would work their way out over the debris of their companions; but despite all sufferings they grimly reflected at the end that the ridge was, at any rate, theirs. The town of Ablain, between Notre Dame de Lorette and Carency, then surrendered, the effect being to isolate Souchez, which now became the principal object of attack. The French attack to the north was directed against Angres on the Souchez-Lens road, and to the south against Neuville St. Vaast. The strength of Souchez lay in the fortified sugar refinery, which was one of the numerous forts (or *fortins*) of which we have spoken above. The work bristled with machine guns. The sugar refinery resisted eighteen days' direct attack. Indeed, it is difficult to see how such positions should ever fall except to a thorough battering of heavy artillery. The sugar refinery was not, in fact, the worst of these forts.

The Labyrinth was an extraordinary defence work which the Germans had partly built, partly adapted, to defend the main approach to Lens along the high-road to Arras. It lay astride the road, north of Ecurie, connected with the fortified eastern part of Neuville St. Vaast. It comprised trenches and redoubts, covered passages, intricate burrowings as deep as fifty feet in some places; and it was furnished with the usual complement of machine guns. The capture of the Labyrinth was an affair of numerous desperate hand-to-hand struggles, some in the open, more in underground passages by the light of electric torches. At times a detachment of Germans simply blundered into an open space in the heart of French captured trenches; sometimes the French similarly lost themselves. Fighting was not all even on one plane. Those at a lower level mined those above them, content at times even to share their fate. The struggle for the Labyrinth marks the gradual decrescendo which characterised all these attacks. By the end of May, when the attacks of the British to the north had also followed the same course, the cemetery at Ablain, which had held out sixteen days after the fall of the town, was in French hands, and on the last day of the month the Souchez sugar refinery fell. Eight days later the whole of Neuville St. Vaast was won. But the whole of Souchez was still the bone of contention for some time.

These three weeks, however, cut off very clearly the first Battle of the Artois, and with it the only offensive that the Allies were able to make. The great offensive, the real attempt to drive the Germans out of France, had not been made because they were not ready. They had neither the reserves of ammunition for such an operation nor even sufficient equipment to make available the vast armies which had been recruited. They had embarked lightly on the Dardanelles struggle, and were now committed to it. One of these reasons alone was sufficient: the shortage of ammunition, heavy guns, and equipment. There is no need to suggest that it was the terrible shortage it was reported at the time. The failure of the British movement on 9th May was put down to a criminal shortage of high-explosive shell, and the sudden announcement of this had no little part in wrecking the Government and causing the appointment of a Minister of Munitions. A more careful survey suggests that the causes of the failure of 9th May were rather those which wrecked



the success of the Neuve Chapelle movement—poor leadership, bad artillery work, and the utter breakdown of Staff work after the attack had been launched without the development of initiative in the subordinate commands, which might have made good its failure. How else can one explain the fact that the defence works on the north were battered down sufficiently to allow the infantry to get eastward some seven miles to the suburbs of Lille? Is it to be thought that the southern section, where the defence works might be expected to be more formidable since they adjoined the bastion of La Bassée, was less supplied than the northern? If it was, then, again, this is not deficient artillery but faulty dispositions. And in any case, when a body of men have so decisively broken the enemy's front on three or four miles that they get through to an extent so vital as to reach the suburbs of the most important defence centre of the whole neighbourhood, surely there should be sufficient generalship to turn the men southward and take the front which still resists in flank. It is impossible to think, if the facts are those given by the *Times* military correspondent, that any German or French attack would not have acted in this manner.

There was, however, no reserve of ammunition commensurate with the calls which modern war makes upon it. High-explosive shell \* is the only means to economise life in the war of a thousand small sieges; indeed, it is the only way of success. There must be an almost unlimited supply, and also of shrapnel. The Russians, at the very moment, were being forced out of Galicia through a real and terrible shortage of ammunition. The Germans had mastered their ammunition crisis; they had more plant in peace time, and now they held northern industrial France and the whole of Belgium. The French had overcome theirs, though they, like Russia and Great Britain, later appointed Ministers of Munitions with the sole duty of seeing to the supply of munitions of war. Great Britain and Russia were the slowest to come to grips with the problem, and they did not actually get the situation in hand until all hope of the expected offensive in the West had passed away, and until Russia had lost Warsaw, the splendid Polish city which had resisted all attacks for a year. The promised great offensive, of course, would never have chosen so small an extent for its battle front, and certainly not an area so broken by every obstacle which could hinder the advance of a huge body of men.

The spring offensive in the Artois, however, gave the Allies certain tangible advantages.† There can be no doubt that it proved as brilliant a success for the French as it had proved a poor showing for the British. The French took at least 5,000 prisoners. The other German casualties are difficult to estimate. The figures given for one French division make the relative casualties in the first advance about one French to ten Germans; and this French division seems to have accounted for from 15,000 to 18,000 alone. Numbers of that order would make the German casualty list something like 100,000 at least. The French lost heavily in the work which came after the first advance. Indeed, it seems difficult not to prefer the defenders' position in such warfare. But there can be little doubt that the balance of gains in human material lay with the French, and the offensive tended to accelerate the process of attrition. Of other gains the chief was the reduction of

\* The generals could not at first make up their minds as to which sort of shell they required most, and part of the blame for the lack of high-explosive shell must in any case be attributable to Lord French for his lack of foresight before the war, when he was Chief of Staff.

† Ludendorff confesses that it caused the German Staff "great anxiety."

the German salient in the Artois, and the consequent driving in of the outer defences of Lens. The French line was straightened out and more easily defensible. The tactical gain was very high. All round Lens small stealthy approaches had been made to what was a critical centre. The gains included good jumping-off ground, as was seen when the great offensive actually began, and subsidiary actions were fought here. The moral gain to the Allies was great. The French infantry had again shown their splendid spirit, and it is no wonder the Germans admired them and feared them so much. Attacks such as those on Notre Dame de Lorette win their place in enduring history.

As to the British share in the offensive, it is possible it would have proved more significant if it had not been a sort of postscript to the terrible gas attacks in the north. Leadership which has the memory of a recent defeat of that sort in mind can hardly be as cool, still less as confident, as it should be at the opening of an attack upon a fortified position held by a valiant enemy.

## IX. ITALY JOINS THE ALLIES.

A NEW phase in the war began when, on May 23, 1915, Italy declared war on Austria. It was but an apparent incongruity which ranged this third member of the Triple Alliance on the side of the Entente. The real incongruity had lain in the fact that Italy had entered into the Alliance at all. She was lured into it by the exigencies of Bismarckian politics, and from the moment of entering it in 1882 the circumstances galled her. Italy, with her eager democracy and national aspiration, had much more in common with France or England than with the unwieldy and conservative monarchies of Central Europe. From France, it is true, she was divided by clashing ambitions in Northern Africa, and in the first years after the occupation of Rome by the sympathy of French clericals with the temporal power of the Papacy.

For some time Italy tried to stand in cautious isolation, but the establishment of a French protectorate in Tunisia in 1881 drove her into the arms of the Central Monarchies. There were abundance of bitter memories and actual grievances standing between Austria and Italy; but an alliance with Berlin involved joining hands with Vienna, the traditional enemy of Italian unity. Italy was very much the step-sister in the Alliance; but her position was improved when, in 1887, an understanding was entered into between Italy and Great Britain which ensured a cordial co-operation in all Mediterranean questions from that date onwards.

The alliance with Germany had been sought by Italy with the view of obtaining support against France and Austria. She found herself in a false position as the ally of one of these Powers, and received very little help against the other in North Africa, which was a natural field for Italian expansion. But, both within the Alliance and by reason of it, the position of Italy in European politics steadily improved, and by degrees a better understanding grew up between her and France. During the greater part of the period during which Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance she was on more cordial terms with the Entente Powers than with her Allies; and it was generally held that a European war would find Italy fighting against Austria.

The condition was inherent in the state of European politics. Italy's gain must



be Austria's loss. The object of the *Irredentists*, the recovery of Italian lands held by Austria, was the most obvious source of disagreement ; but Italy's desire to consolidate her northern frontier could again only be fulfilled when Austria should loose her grip on the passes through the Alps. Again, Austria's menace to the Balkans was indirectly a menace to Italy's position on the Adriatic. Italy fretted at the Austrian hold on the Adriatic, and she feared above all things the seizure of the Albanian coast, for the long east Italian coast would then be defenceless against Valona and other bases on the Dalmatian coast. So great was the uneasiness on this point that a special clause in the Triple Alliance provided that any access of power to either country in the Balkans or the neighbouring coast should be balanced by corresponding advantage to the other.

An alliance built on such precarious foundations, in direct opposition to the instincts of the peoples, could not have any real stability. The feeling of at least some sections of the Italian people was shown in 1891, when the Alliance was nearly due for renewal. The Radicals agitated to prevent its renewal, but the Ministry carried it through, though Germany took the initiative. But it is significant, in the light of recent events, that the Italian Prime Minister, Rudini, attempted at this point to limit the terms of the Alliance. He proposed that Italy should be released from the obligations of the treaty should Great Britain be one of the Powers declaring war against Austria or Hungary. Berlin could not accept this proviso as a formal clause of the treaty, but it was accepted as a protocol. Even then, in spite of the formalities of the Alliance, the prophets required no great insight to foretell that a European war would find Italy ranged on the side opposed to Austria. Yet this significant protocol was destroyed when the treaty again came up for renewal in 1902.

The renewal took place, though feeling had run high against it for two years before, and the Italian king was known to be very loath to throw in his lot with his allies. During the next decade Italian sentiment tended more and more towards an understanding with the Entente Powers. Though Austria did not violate the letter of the clauses of the treaty dealing with the Balkans, she sinned against the spirit in establishing financial agents in Macedonia. Italian resentment flared up, too, on Austria's annexation of Bosnia and the Herzegovina without warning to her ally. There were people in Italy who felt that something might be gained by a closer alliance with Austria ; but one vital weakness in the Triple Alliance was that Germany feared such an understanding between her allies, and an alliance between Germany and France, in spite of the former's retaining Alsace-Lorraine, was almost as feasible.

The rift between Germany and Italy became apparent over the Morocco crisis, in which Italy lent all her moral support to France. And when the trend of Italian policy in Tripoli became apparent, both Germany and Austria did their utmost to thwart her. Already, in 1907, the chief of the Austrian General Staff had expressed his opinion that it would be well to attack Italy while she was engaged on her expedition to Tripoli. This was but of a piece with the fact that, though the one real advantage which Italy gained from the Alliance was freedom from attack by Austria, politicians in that country still envisaged a "promenade to Milan" as on the horizon of practical politics.

As for Germany, the Italian annexation of Tripoli in 1911 wounded her both politically and financially. Germany herself had ambitions there, and Tripoli had

become the site of one of those characteristically insidious commercial campaigns by which Germany sought to prepare the way for political expansion. It was irksome, too, that the Turk, whom it was important to impress with the value of Germany's protection, should receive this rude blow.

During the war between Turkey and Italy her allies did all in their power to hamper her under the guise of zeal for international rights. They vetoed any action on the coasts of European Turkey or the Ægean Islands, and later any action at all against Turkey in Europe, threatening Italy that a breach might have "serious consequences." In the first year of the war, on the other hand, the relations between France and Italy improved. The Triple Alliance seemed doomed, when a combination of circumstances in 1912 led to a temporarily strained situation between the Powers of the Entente and Italy, which threw her back once more on to the Alliance. The delicate question of the "right of search" of shipping was the rift within the lute. It was ultimately decided at the Hague that Italy's action in some disputed cases of search was completely justified, but this could not soothe the ruffled feelings.

Great Britain, too, felt the natural resentment of a peace-loving nation for one which had lightly, it seemed, broken the peace of the world; and the Italians resented the accusations made by many English newspapers against the character of the Italian army in the conduct of the war in Tripoli.

These conditions led to a renewal of the Triple Alliance in December 1912, some eighteen months before it was due to expire. Yet not for a moment did Austria and Italy cease to watch each other jealously. The course of the Balkan wars proved a great blow to Austria's plan in those regions. Her great ambition had been to reach Salonika and the Ægean Sea by way of Servia. The success of Servia at the expense of the Turk threatened to balk this plan. It was also distasteful to Austria as encouraging the Slav elements among her subject peoples. For Italy, on the other hand, the strengthening of Servia and the other Balkan States at the expense of the Turk was a guarantee for the immunity of the eastern coast of the Adriatic from Austrian power, which, if once established in Albania, might completely close the Adriatic to Italian shipping.

In 1913, when the settlement after the first Balkan War was pending, Italy showed herself willing to act with Austria up to a certain point. They were ready, by setting up an independent Albania, to deprive Servia of the Adriatic port she had fairly won; but the Austrian proposal to occupy Montenegro was denounced by Italy as a breach of Clause VII. of the treaty of Alliance, and as a step inevitably calculated to upset the balance of power in the Balkans. Italy declared that if Austria took this step, she herself would land expeditions on the Albanian coast at Durazzo and Valona. Austria did not dare to take the threatened step, but her attitude determined the action of the Powers in denying to the Balkan States the full fruits of their victory.

Then came the second Balkan War and the triumphant prowess of Servia. The situation was more than Austria could brook, and it is now known that, on the morrow of the signing of the Treaty of Bukharest, Austria had invited Italy to help her in a projected invasion of Servia. She declared that she regarded this as a "defensive" step, in which case both Germany and Italy were bound by the terms of Clause III. of the Alliance to assist her. Austria can hardly have hoped that Italy would accept this point of view, that she was obliged to defend herself against the aggres-



sions of an exhausted Serbia, whose one desire must have been time for recuperation. The disclosures by Giolitti of this action by Austria, whether the latter regarded the attack upon Serbia as practicable or whether her suggestion was a feeler, caused a great sensation in the councils of Europe, since it antedated the ill-feeling which led to the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. The latter probably knew of Austria's action, and her resentment found expression in the murder of the Archduke. The cynicism of the plan to attack her at this point would be more outrageous if it were really a serious proposal. What is more probable is that it was put forward as a feeler to ascertain the feeling of Italy on the Balkan problems. Austria was not long left in doubt. Italy's answer was a declaration in plain terms that there was no question of defence, and she coupled her refusal to give assistance with urgent representation to her other ally that she should dissuade Austria from the project.

Austria's contention was that Serbia's attitude established a *casus fœderis*, as provided for in Clause III. of the Alliance. It would have been more modest, though barely feasible, to appeal to Clause IV., which envisaged such circumstances as would call for "benevolent neutrality" on the part of her allies.

The text of these pregnant clauses is as follows :—\*

"*Clause III.*—In case one or two of the high contracting parties, without direct provocation on their part, should be attacked by one or more Great Powers, not signatory of the present Treaty, and should become involved in a war with them, the *casus fœderis* would arise simultaneously for all the high contracting parties.

"*Clause IV.*—In case a Great Power not signatory of the present Treaty should threaten the State security of one of the high contracting parties, and in case the threatened party should thereby be compelled to declare war against that Great Power, the two other contracting parties engage themselves to maintain benevolent neutrality towards their Ally. Each of them reserves its right in this case to take part in the war if it thinks fit in order to make common cause with its Ally."

Italy's answer to Austria's proposals in 1913 showed her feeling so effectively that, when the moment of aggression actually arrived, she was not consulted in any way or even acquainted with the facts. Austria's proposal that Italy should assist her in her action against Serbia was preposterous, because such action represented a blow at Italian interests in the Balkans. The ultimatum which Austria gave to Serbia on July 23, 1914, while completely ignoring her ally, was a direct breach of Clause VII. of the Treaty of Alliance. This clause ran :—

"Austria-Hungary and Italy, who have solely in view the maintenance, as far as possible, of the territorial *status quo* in the East, engage themselves to use their influence to prevent all territorial changes which might be disadvantageous to the one or the other of the Powers signatory of the present Treaty. To this end they will give reciprocally all information calculated to enlighten each other concerning their own intentions and those of other Powers. Should, however, the case arise that, in the course of events, the maintenance of the *status quo* in the territory of the Balkans or of the Ottoman coasts and islands in the Adriatic or the Ægean Seas becomes impossible, and that, either in consequence of the action of a third Power or for any other reason, Austria-Hungary or Italy should be obliged to change

\* Translation published in the *Times*, June 1, 1915.

the *status quo* for their part by a temporary or permanent occupation, such occupation would only take place after previous agreement between the two Powers, which would have to be based upon the principle of a reciprocal compensation for all territorial or other advantages that either of them might acquire over and above the existing *status quo*, and would have to satisfy the interests and rightful claims of both parties."

Plainly Austria's neglect to consult Italy before issuing her ultimatum to Servia was a breach of this article, as Signor Salandra pointed out to the German Ambassador at Rome and formally intimated through the Italian Ambassador at Vienna. Immediately afterwards she raised the question of compensation for the disturbance of the state of things in the Balkans, declaring that if adequate compensation were not made "the Triple Alliance would be irreparably broken." Meanwhile, on 4th August, the day on which England declared war on Germany, Italy showed her hand to Europe. For the moment she proclaimed her neutrality, explaining what might look like a desertion of her allies by pointing out that the *casus fœderis* envisaged in Clause III. of the Treaty of Alliance did not exist. The ultimate attitude of Italy must depend on the question of compensation. The nature of the compensation she desired had already been indicated. The minds of the Italian people and statesmen naturally turned to the *Irredenta*. That they expected a voluntary yielding up of the coveted regions by Austria is not to be believed, but Italy, in view of the unpreparedness of her army and resources, had perforce to play a waiting game.

The question of compensation was not formally raised with Austria until December. It was deferred through the death of the Foreign Minister, the Marquis of San Giuliano, in October; but the direction of Italy's ultimate action was indicated when in that same month she seized Valona, and so gained control of the entrance to the Adriatic. The taking of Valona indicated logically that Italy would enter the war on the side of the Allies.

Formal negotiations between the two countries were opened in December, when Baron Sonnino, who had succeeded to the Foreign Office, sent a note to Count Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister. It pointed out that the military advance actually made in Servia constituted a fact which must be an object of examination on the part of the Italian and Austro-Hungarian Governments, according to Article VII. of the Triple Alliance. The note further pointed out that, according to this article, an agreement should have been made with Italy, and compensation given previous to even temporary occupations. It emphasised, too, the importance to Italy that the independence of Servia should be maintained, that no real guarantee had been given that Austria-Hungary would not acquire Servian territory, and that, even apart from this, compensation was due for other methods of upsetting the equilibrium of the Balkans by other means besides acquisition of territory. The note went on to point out that public opinion in Italy was more and more concerned with national aspirations, and to indicate that compensation in this direction would make for peace.

The Austro-Hungarian Minister replied by denying that the occupation of Servian territory was more than "momentary," and again emphasised the purely "defensive" character of Austria's action against Servia. The "momentary" character of the Austrian occupation of Servia was, however, as all the world soon



knew, due not to any moderation on the part of Austria, but to the fact that her armies had been routed by the Serbs. It may have been partly due to this fact, and partly to the unswerving persistence of the Italian Foreign Minister, that Berchtold consented before the end of December to negotiate on the question of compensation, and admitted that an agreement should have been made with Italy before Austria went to war.

It was at this point that Germany made a belated effort to confirm Italy in her neutrality. Prince Bülow, who, since his dismissal from the imperial chancellorship in 1909, had lived in Rome, was now put at the head of the German Embassy. Bülow, speaking for Vienna, suggested that Italy should be given the Trentino. The Austrians, for their part, with the new Foreign Secretary, the Hungarian Baron Burian, strove to turn the attention of Italy to Albania, whose acquisition would have meant no direct loss to Austria. Baron Sonnino reiterated the old *Irredentist* formula of "the Trentino and Trieste." Bülow replied that Austria would rather have war than yield Trieste, and this standpoint indicated, too, the German position.

In February 1915 the signs of strain had become more apparent. Italy seems to have believed that the exhausted and epidemic stricken state of Servia might tempt Austria to a new invasion of her territory, in spite of her need of strenuous effort in the Carpathians. In any case, Baron Sonnino issued a warning that no further step must be taken by Austria in the Balkans without an agreement with Italy, according to Clause VII. of the Alliance. He added that this warning had "the precise significance of a veto." It may be that this uncompromising attitude of Italy saved Servia from a new invasion, which, it was rumoured, Austria contemplated embarking on with German help.

At the end of March Baron Sonnino formulated his whole position towards Austria. He repeated his warning against further interference in the Balkans, and declared further that compensation must be made to Italy out of land already in the possession of Austria; that if Austria's ultimate profit should prove to be greater than at the moment appeared, Italy should receive proportionate increase of compensation. Moreover, the territorial compensation must be public and immediate. Burian agreed that Austria should cede territory actually in her possession, but refused immediate occupation, and Bülow once more tried the force of his diplomacy. He promised that "Germany herself would guarantee that Austria would fully execute all her promises when the war came to an end." Without waiting for Italy to accept or reject this offer, Baron Burian came forward with a somewhat vague offer of "territories in South Tirol, including the city of Trent." Baron Sonnino replied that Italy's requirements were not in any way to be satisfied by "a strip of territory in the Trentino." Upon this Baron Burian proceeded to define the extent of the "strip" the acceptance of which was to bind Italy to a position of "benevolent neutrality" for the duration of the war, and to deprive her of all chance of further compensation, however favourable the course of the war might ultimately prove to Austria.

The counter proposals which Austria invited and Italy formulated showed how great was the gulf fixed between the views of the two Powers. Italy demanded the Trentino, the extension of her boundaries to the Isonzo River, the occupation by herself of several important strategic positions, and the establishment of Trieste as an independent State. Moreover, she was to have a number of Dalmatian islands and the sovereignty of Valona, and Austria was to give up her interest in Albania.

However ambitious such claims may have appeared, they were not a full *Irredentist* programme. Indeed, considering the extent and importance of the territories the *Irredentists* claimed, Italy's demands were extremely modest.

As in April 1915 there were rumours that a separate peace between Russia and Austria was likely—a contingency which would have improved Austria's position—Sonnino pressed for a reply. The reply was a refusal on nearly all points of Italy's demands. Only one concession was made by Austria—the offer of a more advanced frontier in the Trentino. The concession did not meet Italy's desires, and the refusal of immediate cession was an insuperable barrier in the way of an understanding. It must have been about this time that Italy began her conversations with France and Britain, for on 26th April a treaty was signed which promised Italy not only the Trentino with a strategic frontier, Trieste, and Dalmatia, but other concessions outside Europe. This was not known at the time, and the provisions of the treaty were only published in 1918. On 4th May a formal denunciation of the Triple Alliance and a declaration of Italy's complete freedom from obligations to her former ally was delivered in Vienna.

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Even at the last moment Germany made a bid to keep Italy from joining in the war on the side of the Allies. It had been difficult to know in what direction popular feeling in Italy was most strongly moved. Since the early months of the war there had been a strong party in favour of the nation throwing in its lot with the Entente Powers and the cause of civilisation. The death of San Guiliiano probably prevented undue influence being given to this party. The fact that Sonnino, a man whom every one trusted and who was known to have leaned towards Austrian friendship, felt himself at length driven to hostility, convinced the best opinion in the country that it was well to have done with the Triple Alliance.

It was at this last moment that German wire-pulling led to the return to Rome of Signor Giolitti, the discredited but withal most powerful party leader in Italy. He began a campaign in favour of maintaining the Alliance. Bülow seconded his efforts by every device of diplomacy. A bid was made for the support of the Italian clericals, when Erzberger, the leader of the German clerical party, was brought to Rome to emphasise the solidarity of the interests of the Catholic Powers. And now at length Austria showed herself willing to make more substantial concessions, and above all to make them immediately. The German Chancellor read them to the Reichstag on 18th May. The whole of the Tirol was now to be given up; Trieste was to be made an Imperial free city with an Italian administration and an Italian university. Italian sovereignty was to be recognised over Valona and its sphere of interests, and Austria-Hungary was to be disinterested concerning Albania. The national interests of Italian nationals in Austria-Hungary were to be respected.

Austria was thus prepared to make concessions all along the line, but it was too late. The die was cast. A real tide of anger was rising in Italy and carrying with it the great mass of the people who had stood hesitatingly between the Interventionists and the Neutrals. The news of the sinking of the *Lusitania* on 8th May fanned the flame, and Italy passed through a "week of passion." Though the Ministry of Signor Salandra resigned five days later, in face of the campaigns of the Giolitti party and Bülow, the intervention of Italy on the side of the Entente was certain. The Italian people were determined not to be dragged in the wake of Germany and Austria whether they won or lost.



The news of Salandra's resignation, coming while yet the emotions of the people were freshly stirred, caused immense excitement. Rome rose in protest, and throughout Italy the people demanded the recall of the Minister. The attempt to form a new Ministry failed, and on 16th May Salandra was recalled. Giolitti, who had been the central object of the people's scorn, withdrew from Rome. Parliament met, and a bill giving the Government extraordinary powers in the event of war was passed with an overwhelming majority. Italy was in a state bordering on exaltation. It hardly needed the stirring campaign of Gabriel d'Annunzio to recall the memory of the heroes who had led the movement for Italian freedom. Garibaldi's hymn was on all lips. On 22nd May a general mobilisation was begun, and on 23rd May Italy formally declared war against Austria-Hungary.

Not only on the Italian side of the frontier was there enthusiasm for the war. Amid the medley of races associated under the Dual Monarchy there were many who looked with little sympathy upon the idea of war with Italy; but there were tradition and history to strengthen the hearts of the bulk of Francis Joseph's subjects, and his Proclamation is a document worth quoting:—

“ Francis Joseph to my peoples :

“ The King of Italy has declared war on me. A perfidy of which history knows not the like has been committed by the kingdom of Italy against both Allies. After an Alliance of more than thirty years, during which time she has been able to increase her territorial possessions and develop herself to a condition of prosperity undreamed of, Italy has abandoned us in the hour of danger, and gone over with flying colours into the camp of our enemies. We did not menace Italy; we did not curtail her authority; we did not attack her honour or interests. We have always loyally responded to the duties of our Alliance and afforded her our protection when she took the field. We have done more. When Italy directed covetous glances across our frontier, we were, in order to maintain our Alliance, relationship, and peace, resolved on great and painful sacrifices which particularly grieved our paternal heart. But the covetousness of Italy, who believed the moment should be used, was not to be appeased, and so fate must be accomplished. My armies have victoriously withstood mighty armies in the north during ten months of a gigantic conflict in the most loyal comradeship of arms with the army of my illustrious Ally. The new and treacherous enemy in the south is to you no new enemy. Great memories of Novara, Mortaro, Custoza, and Lizza, which constitute the pride of my youth, and the spirit of Radetzky, the Archduke Albrecht, and Tegethoff, which continues to live in my land and sea forces, are a guarantee to me that also against the south we shall successfully defend the frontiers of the Monarchy. I salute my battle-tried troops, who are inured to the task of victory. I rely on them and their leaders. I rely on my peoples, to whose unexampled spirit of sacrifice my inmost paternal thanks are due. I pray the Almighty to bless our colours, and take under His gracious protection our just cause.” \*

The entrance of Italy into the war gave the Allies an immediate increase of 600,000 men, and perhaps a total of 2,000,000 troops. Whatever other effect these men might have, they must draw off at least half their number of the enemy, to keep them at bay. The Commander-in-Chief, Count Luigi Cadorna, a man of

sixty-four years of age, was highly reputed by the Germans. The son of a general himself, he had risen normally through various positions to his present command. He had written numerous works on military questions, and was supposed to have a unique knowledge of the Austro-Italian frontier. His Chief of Staff was General Porro, a man of much knowledge and experience. The Italian army had seen some colonial warfare during recent years; but, on the whole, it had yet to make its reputation, and it seemed fitting that it should take the field in an European war first of all against the soldiers of its hereditary enemy. Entering the war at this date, Italy had all the advantage of the ten months' close study of the war and its lessons. It is pretty clear that this study had been used to improve and fit the army for all the needs peculiar to the present war. Guns and munitions and equipment generally had been carefully and gradually accumulated, and everything made ready for the day of trial.

The Italian navy was, next to the French, the most powerful, well-organised, and experienced in the Mediterranean. It possessed six Dreadnoughts armed with thirteen 12-inch guns, and designed for a speed of 22 knots. These represented a decided superiority over the four Austrian Dreadnoughts, with their 12-inch guns and 20 knots. There were eleven pre-Dreadnought battleships, and three of them alone were over twenty years of age. There were ten armoured cruisers, sixteen light cruisers, though nine were over twenty years of age and only three with a speed over 23 knots. In this respect Italy was inferior to Austria. Italy also possessed forty destroyers, sixty torpedo boats, and twenty submarines. The fleet had had the recent experience of transporting and disembarking troops for service in Tripoli. The Commander-in-Chief of the Italian navy was one of the best known naval officers in the world. The Duke of the Abruzzi, cousin of the King of Italy, a man of only forty-two years of age, had won great fame as a traveller. He had ascended Mount St. Elias, Alaska, in 1896, and Mount Ruwenzori ten years later. In 1900 he went farther north than Nansen. He commanded a section of the fleet in the Tripolitan War. The Minister of Marine was Rear-Admiral Enrico Nillo, a former Chief of Staff to the Duke of the Abruzzi.

Italy possessed also an efficient and powerful air fleet. To the two hundred or so aeroplanes, arranged in squadrons, in commission when the European War started, she had been adding with all haste, carefully selecting and testing types, and trying to evolve a tactical use of machines by arranging them in heavy and light squadrons. Pilots were trained also to travel at great speed. The navy, too, was well equipped with seaplanes, probably better, in proportion to her size, than even the British navy. In addition to the aeroplanes and hydroplanes, there were at least eight efficient airships. The use of airships had come to be much undervalued during the war; but for mountain work they could not be replaced. Aeroplanes ever find mountain work almost impossible. It is most difficult either to start or to land, whereas airships can hang above the peaks and valleys for long periods at a time.

Immediately on the entrance of Italy into the war the centre of gravity of the European War changed. If we could conceive it scientifically, -like a system of forces, a new and significant force had suddenly been added to a corner where no force had previously existed at all. This naturally had the effect of drawing the centre of gravity towards that point. Part of the Italian frontier ran side by side with France, where indeed lay part of the "unredeemed territory," Nice. An-



other point abutted on Switzerland. But the bulk of the frontier adjoined Austria-Hungary, who had in even recent times administered a significant part of Italian territory, and still governed a considerable amount of true Italian soil. The line of the frontier from Switzerland bent south to Lake Garda in a large bend, including the Southern Tirol or the Trentino, which formed part of "unredeemed" Italy. Other parts were the district west of Gorizia (Görz) to the Adriatic Sea, Trieste and the district south to and including the chief Austrian naval base of Pola, and parts of Dalmatia. In these places peoples of Italian race and speech dwelt. An offensive against Italy would obviously be urged, if Austria had the force, through the Trentino and across the river Isonzo, whose chief stronghold was Gorizia.

The frontier thus described gives no suggestion of the great advantages it offered to the Austrian defensive. The Trentino made a salient about the Adige valley on the southern Alpine slope. The salient is buttressed by lateral mountain ranges with four or five good passes; but it is a most formidable obstacle, nullifying much of an attacking force. Not a single pass could be called even a fair road for an army, and most of them were almost impassable. The Adige valley was the natural way of access, but it, too, was a narrow defile most unsuitable for the march of an army. The Brenner Pass, to which the Adige leads, is one of the famous doors of national Italy. Another is the pass in the Carnatic Alps, through which the Vienna railway runs. Apart from this pass the Carnatic Alps, which continue the frontier from the Trentino to the river Juarli, which is on the eastern frontier, are practically impassable in face of any sort of resolute defence. The eastern boundary, the most vulnerable, was still formidable. The upper reaches of the Juarli share the character of the Trentino and Carnatic Alps; the lower part of the boundary, some twenty miles or so of line from Brazzano to the sea, is hardly enough for any considerable force to deploy upon. Between the hill country and the marshy borders of the sea the line is probably not more than fifteen miles. This position was, therefore, defensible by a small force against a great, and behind it lay the much more formidable military obstacle of the river Isonzo, which down almost the whole of its course is followed by hill country. There is a gap at one spot, the town and district of Gorizia, which was the key to the whole position. The district of Gorizia, a plain in which the town stands, lies in the lap of hills nowhere more than about three miles from the town. In a state of defence Gorizia could be made a fortress of almost impregnable strength.

On the other hand, the boundaries of Italy were quite weak on the face they showed to Austria, and hence the best means of defence—indeed, the only sure means—was a vigorous offensive pressed at every weak point. No vigorous offensive could be pressed eastwards unless the Trentino was thoroughly held by vigorous attack. Alpine passes are free of snow for only three to five months each year, and the end of May was almost the best time to begin the war to secure the best of the season.

## X. THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN.

THE obstacles to an Italian offensive by land were the cogent proof of a bitter past history. To Austria an offensive would have been comparatively easy; and, consequently, this weak boundary against attack and strong barrier to an offensive were constant reminders of a task which was yet incomplete. Italy had grown



The Austro-Italian Frontiers.



into a kingdom at the same time that Prussia had become the German Empire, but the nucleus of the kingdom was not comparable in power to Prussia. The kingdom was the child of a great enthusiasm, but not of a great power; and hence its heritage was a constant anxiety from the strategic points held by its more powerful neighbour and traditional oppressor, Austria-Hungary. This nation occupied a sort of outlook tower on almost the whole of the Italian northern frontier. From the high ground it looked down into the plains, whither it could again send its soldiers on their traditional pilgrimage to ravage and conquer.

The Trentino made a salient into Italy, but a salient that, at its narrowest, was of sufficient width to be a strength rather than a weakness to Austria-Hungary. Such a salient in another country would have been held with the greatest difficulty. Open to attack on three sides, it could have been defended only by a large number of troops perfectly entrenched and munitioned. But nature had left few spots where an invader would not be at a pronounced disadvantage. The main avenue of advance must be the valley of the Adige, at the head of which the fortress Trent stood. And this was the only road a considerable army could take; and even if Trent were taken, there was more mountainous country to cross before the Brenner Pass was reached. The Trentino salient must be engaged, since, in effect, it constituted an armed camp lying on the flank of the communications of any Italian army which was operating towards the east. But it could not be the main field of Italian operations against Austria, for an advance in this direction, though it looked temptingly to Vienna, would probably draw the German armies to an attack on Italy. This was a danger which the Italians were extremely anxious to avoid at the time. General Cadorna, therefore, decided to wage an offensive on the eastern frontier along the line of the Isonzo—a line where it would be suicidal to stand on the defensive, and which presented no insuperable obstacles to a determined offensive. It has been estimated that Italy brought 600,000 troops to bear on the frontier operations, and that she held an equal number in reserve, besides the two million and more men of the Territorial Militia who were not sufficiently efficient for frontier warfare. There were hopes in the Allied countries that this reserve, consisting partly of first-line troops and partly of the Mobile Militia, which came between these and the Territorials, might be drawn upon to assist the Allies in some field of warfare external to Italy, perhaps Alsace or the Dardanelles. But these hopes were disappointed. General Cadorna decided to hold these reserves in Italy in case of attack by Germany.

The campaign on the Isonzo was not calculated to rouse the enthusiasm of the Allies, and there was perhaps a slight feeling that Italy was fighting for her own hand. But this was after all natural. The aim of every Italian patriot was to win for Italy her natural boundaries, and in driving the traditional intruder off Italian soil, to complete the process of unification begun in 1867. These were, indeed, the avowed objects of the Italian entry into the war, and were given expression in the Proclamation made by the King of Italy at the beginning of the offensive in the third week of May:—

“Soldiers of Land and Sea,—The solemn hour of the vindication of the nation's claims has arrived. Following the example of my great ancestors, I assume to-day supreme command of the forces by land and sea, with sure confidence in the victory which your courage, self-sacrifice, and discipline will achieve.

"The enemy whom you are to fight is tried and worthy of your arms. With the advantage of ground and scientific preparedness in his favour, he will offer you an obstinate resistance ; but your indomitable spirit will assuredly overcome him. Soldiers, to you is the glory of hoisting the tricolour of Italy upon the sacred bounds which nature marks as the confines of our country, to you is the glory of completing the task begun so heroically by our fathers."

It was in this spirit that Italy joined in the war, and her plan of campaign was naturally guided by it. But it must be remembered that any Italian success would be certain to help her Allies, since troops would be detached or withheld from other fronts to oppose her advance. The hard-pressed Russians undoubtedly benefited by the Italian offensive, and they later proved their gratitude by assisting Italy when she was reeling under an Austrian attack. The initiative in actual warfare between Austria and Italy was taken by Austria. Italy declared war on 23rd May, and the same day the Austrians struck on the Carnic front, which connects the eastern sector with the Trentino. But the Italian troops were in position over the whole frontier, and were able to cope with the attack. They did more. In a rapid recoil they seized Val d'Inferno Pass. While the troops were engaging on the frontier, another blow was struck by the Austrian navy. The Italian navy was, as we have seen, sufficiently strong, but the Austrian attack was a surprise blow, which the Italians were not prepared to meet. The attack began a little after 4 A.M. on the 24th of May, when a squadron of two battleships, four cruisers, and a score of destroyers, well supported by air craft, darted out of Pola to raid the Adriatic coast. The attack was planned to delay the Italian concentration, and was directed at several very important points ranging from Brindisi to Venice, where the Arsenal and the oil tanks and balloon sheds on the Lida were attacked. An unsuccessful attempt was made on Porte Corsini, the Italian torpedo-boat base north of Rimini, in which the destroyers were driven off, and one seriously damaged. The railway station and bridges at Rimini were also attacked by a cruiser. The railway station bridge and part of the line at Sinigaglia were wrecked by another cruiser. To the south of Ancona the bridge over the Potenza River was destroyed, while farther south still two cruisers and several destroyers attacked the district round Manfredonia and Vieste, damaging several coast towns, and shelling a railway bridge and station. All this damage was done within two hours, and the Austrians sailed back to Pola before the Italian fleet had a chance to strike a blow at them. They had carried out very skilfully a well-conceived plan which played its part in delaying the Italian concentration.

On that same day the Austrians blew up two bridges across the Adige, thus giving practical proof of their present intention to stand on the defensive along the frontier of the Trentino and the Carnic Alps. On the Isonzo front the Austrians took up a strongly fortified line well to the east of the river, and only touching it at one point, Gorizia. Here they held the head of the bridge on the western bank. The command of the operations against Italy had been given to the Archduke Eugene, who was compelled to keep to the defensive owing to the calls which the Galician campaign was making upon the Austrian army.

It was necessary for Italy, while directing her main offensive against the Isonzo line, to contain at least the Trentino salient and the Carnic frontier. If sufficiently vigorous action were not pursued in these directions the Italian communications



with the Isonzo would have been liable to interruption by a sudden swoop from the north.

The great wedge of the Trentino can be made practically impregnable on the west ; but the Italians prepared to advance upon Trent by every possible entry into the Trentino. Advancing by the valleys of the Adige and the Sugana, they pressed forward with great skill and courage. In three days they had seized Ala, in the Adige valley, and a little later they compelled the Austrians to abandon Borgo in the Sugana valley, half-way between Trent and the frontier. The Italians, however, did not occupy it, as it was commanded by heights held by the Austrians. The advance over the difficult hills to the east of Lake Garda was only made possible by the extraordinary ingenuity and skill of the Italian engineers, whose wire-rope railways (*telefericas*) carried dizzy men from peak to peak, and kept them supplied in almost incredible positions. Along the Giudicaria valley some progress was also made ; and even near the Tonale Pass, in the west of the Trentino, some ground was gained. An advance towards Trent was also initiated by way of the fortress of Riva ; but it was not until the third week of October, when Pregasina, two miles over the frontier, fell, that the Italians at length really came within reach of action against the Riva forts. The closing in of the Italians on the forts which played the rôle of outworks of Trent did not represent any great gain in territory, but their firm establishment in these positions meant that an Austrian offensive, with all the factors in Austria's favour, was rendered difficult, even should Austrian troops be at length released from other fronts to conduct it.

The Italians were quick to seize various other important strategic points in the Tirol. Within twenty-four hours of the declaration of war the famous Alpini had won the Val d'Inferno Pass by a brilliant bayonet charge. Cortina d'Ampezzo, well remembered by tourists, was taken on the 30th May, and a footing thus gained on the great Strada d'Alemagna, only fifteen miles from the Tranzenfeste-Villach railway. The difficulties of advance along this great road are not, however, represented by these figures, for the road passes through a narrow defile, and between Cortina and the railway the redoubtable range of the Dolomites rears its highest peaks.

It must always be remembered that the closing in of the Italian forces on the smaller fortresses commanding the routes converging on Trent represented not only a restricted offensive movement on the part of the Italians, but a successful effort to intercept an offensive movement of the Austrians over the Carnic Alps to interfere with the main Italian offensive in the Isonzo district. This Austrian offensive, which the Italians had anticipated, was actually begun on 23rd May, but was successfully checked. Cadorna had already shown his competence by thus methodically closing every avenue of advance into the Venetian plain.

The ground over which the eastern offensive was being pushed is quite different from any other part of the Austro-Italian frontier. The land forming the basin of the Isonzo River, after it issues from a deep gorge in the Julian Alps, is flat, divided sharply off from the foothills of those mountains. After some miles the river reaches the low and arid plateau called the Carso, and south again to the coast town of Trieste stretches a narrow strip of flat country.

Along the other frontiers the Austrians had not so much to defend a boundary as to hold splendidly fortified positions along it. On the Isonzo line conditions were different. A much larger number of men in proportion were required to defend it.

The Austrians, as we have seen, decided not to hold the line of the river, but to take up a line farther east, only touching the river at Gorizia, or Görz, a fortified town which was of the greatest strategic importance, since it commanded one of the main avenues of approach to Trieste. The reasons for the Austrian decision not to hold the line of the river are not very clear. Afterwards they strove desperately



The Isonzo Frontier.

to recover the land from which they had so lightly fallen back, especially the edge of the Carso plateau, where the Italians had soon firmly established themselves.

The eastern offensive was pushed forward rapidly enough at first, though it was to break for months unsuccessfully against the stubborn walls of Gorizia. Already, on the evening of 24th May, the Italians had penetrated well into Austrian territory. The line stretched with its left on Caporetto on the Isonzo, with its centre looking



down on Gorizia, and with its right between Cormons and Terzo. The co-operation between army and navy, a feature on so many fronts, was here found once again, for on the extreme right among the coast islands the Italian destroyers were actively engaged. They did good work in shelling the shipyards of Monfalcone, whose capture subsequently on 6th June represented an important success to the Italian arms. Monfalcone had to bear not only bombardment from the sea, but also from the air. The Italian airmen were extremely active and daring, especially in their attacks on Monfalcone and on the railway between Gorizia and Trieste, by which the bulk of supplies for Gorizia had, of course, to be transported. The line of the Isonzo was reached but not crossed by the end of May. The fighting was made more difficult by the flooding in a conspicuously wet season of the already rapid river. The bridges had been destroyed by the enemy. In spite of these difficulties the Italians occupied Monte Nero on the Upper Isonzo, near Tolmino, and Plava on the Middle Isonzo. They had now achieved their main object, the establishment of a firm defensive line along the river. All the land to the west of the Isonzo was in their hands, and some strong outposts pushed forward across the river. This was in itself a brilliant achievement, and in striking contrast with the classic conception of the method of a campaign between Austria and Italy. Always it had been accepted as a natural condition of such a campaign that the Italians would have to evacuate large tracts of their territory and fall back to the Tagliamento. It was, of course, only Austria's pre-occupation with other fronts which made these conditions of campaign possible for the Italians. They, on the other hand, did service to the Allies, by holding a force of probably at least half a million Austrians along their frontiers. But for this the Russian reverses in Galicia might have been severer still.

Their rate of advance in the first weeks of the war was naturally not maintained. There can be no doubt that the Austrians had attempted to hold the Isonzo line with too few men, but by July, at least, they had realised their error and begun to mass men on this front. In front of Gorizia and about Tolmino very fierce fighting took place, and still the places were held; while, in spite of fierce Austrian attacks across the Carso plateau, the Italians were not to be dislodged from the edge of the plateau which they had secured. Several vigorous attempts were made to increase the extent of their hold on the Carso; but although prisoners were taken and slight progress was made, the success achieved was small. In the first six months of the war the Italians had established themselves across the Isonzo and at all the avenues into Italy over the frontier, but had not succeeded in regaining any but a small part of unredeemed Italy.

## XI. FORMATION OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT.

DURING the early part of the spring of 1915 a vague feeling of uneasiness began to take possession of the people of Great Britain. The feeling did not arise of itself, though the public was just as competent to judge its sources at first as it was when carefully prompted by certain newspapers. There was first the question of the Dardanelles. Rumour had it that Mr. Churchill had forced the naval operations upon Lord Fisher. As the Dardanelles was still intact and several warships had been sunk, newspapers readily laid all the blame upon the shoulders of Mr. Churchill.

They would not part with Lord Fisher, but Mr. Churchill must go. The injustice of such a discrimination was clear to most thoughtful people. If Lord Fisher was so weak as to acquiesce in such a position, he was surely not the man to bear the final responsibility of the British naval operations. In any case, he should have shared Mr. Churchill's blame. This was one source of uneasiness, and the blame fell upon the First Lord, and the First Sea Lord was acquitted and indeed stood higher than ever.

Another subject which caused depression, and even deeper uneasiness, was the shortage of munitions. Issuing out of a vague cloud of rumour, which first suggested that the British soldiers in France were short of shell, that soldiers at home had no adequate equipment, that the men at the front had not sufficient machine guns, the point merged at last as a charge of incompetence to provide sufficient *high explosive* shell. There can be no doubt that the Government was largely responsible for the state of things, since numbers of quite contradictory statements were being issued. The course of things was muddled very considerably by the melodramatic disclosures of the military correspondent of the *Times*, who was allowed to publish accounts of actions in which men's lives were lost through lack of high explosive shell. No one concerned in this act came out without loss of dignity, though perhaps this is the price one pays for democratic government.

The need for heavy shell was, indeed, discovered by every army during the war, and was, in fact, due to the conditions it had assumed. Men who were heavily entrenched could not be driven out without terrible loss of life, unless the entrenchments, which were virtually fortifications, were first destroyed by a large expenditure of high explosive shell. Shrapnel shell is used for killing, high explosive for destruction of works, whether these are field works or fortresses. The Official French Review of the First Six Months of the War acknowledged an ammunition crisis in France, but claimed that it had been got over. That a similar crisis had occurred in Great Britain was more natural; and a subsequent disclosure by Lord Haldane made it clear that attempts had been made to deal with it as far back as October. Lord Haldane's explanation of the failure of the attempt was the difficulties between capital and labour. The fact that employers did not always fulfil their contracts is clear; the reason which lay behind is not so clear. On 15th March Lord Kitchener in the House of Lords put the question of output of munitions in these words: "The output is not only not equal to our necessities, but does not fulfil our expectations, for a very large number of orders have not been completed by the dates on which they were promised. . . . The supply of war material at the present moment and for the next two or three months is causing me very serious anxiety."

A little later a Munitions of War Committee was appointed to expedite the manufacture of war munitions. As announced in the House of Commons on 15th April it was a strong committee, combining a number of technical experts and some men who were supposed to have a grip of finance and business, with Mr. Lloyd George as chairman. On 21st April, about five weeks after Lord Kitchener's statement, Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons stated that the manufacture of munitions of war had been put on a footing that relieved the Government of all anxiety. Mr. Asquith, the day before at Newcastle-on-Tyne, had stated that neither the British army nor those of her Allies had been hampered through lack of munitions. It was on the top of these statements that, like a bombshell, fell the dispatch from the military correspondent of the *Times* on 14th May. There had been consider-



able agitation from time to time against the embargo upon war correspondents. When, therefore, the *Times'* military correspondent sent his dispatch from British headquarters, it came as a thunderclap. He described the British attacks in the districts of Fromelles and Richebourg. "We had not sufficient high explosive to level his (the enemy's) parapets . . . and when our infantry gallantly stormed the trenches, as they did in both attacks, they found a garrison undismayed . . . and maxims on all sides ready to pour in a stream of bullets. . . . The want of an unlimited supply of high explosives was a fatal bar to our success. . . . We need more high explosive." Coming upon reassuring statements from statesmen who had followed the War Minister's depressing description of affairs, this dispatch caused a great deal of uneasiness. Lord Kitchener referred to this dispatch when in the House of Lords, on the following day, he said, "I am confident that in the very near future we shall be in a satisfactory position with regard to the supply of these shells to the army at the front." The *Times* unmasked its own batteries a few days later, when it attributed the cause of the deficiency in high explosive shells to the War Minister. On 21st May its principal leading article said: "Our armies in the field have notoriously been deficient in the men and high explosive shells which they need to beat the Germans. . . . They need reinforcements; they need shells—and shells of the right kind. Neither have been provided in adequate quantities for the simple reason that Lord Kitchener's orders were given too late, plain warnings were disregarded . . . and the consequence is that hundreds of thousands of British lives have been sacrificed in an unequal contest." It went on to suggest that the organisation of the production of munitions of war should be placed in the hands of a separate Minister.

With characteristic vigour the *Daily Mail* and *Evening News* took up the cry. On 21st May a leader was headed "The Tragedy of the Shells—Lord Kitchener's Grave Error." "Lord Kitchener's Tragic Blunder!" was the heading on another page. That phrase became a most familiar one in the streets. The leader made such statements as these: "What we know is that Lord Kitchener has starved the army in France of high explosive shells. . . . The admitted fact is that Lord Kitchener ordered the wrong kind of shell."\* The leader went on in the most courageous manner to allocate to the various generals responsible for the war their share of genius. "Sir John Cowans is a great soldier—one of the greatest soldiers in the world. It is to him we owe the superb arrangements for the feeding of our troops. Sir William Robertson, Sir John French's Chief of Staff, is a great soldier. To him is due the fine Staff work of the British army in France. Lord Kitchener is a great soldier. To him is due the idea of advertising for an army. . . . If, by any mischance, Lord Kitchener went to France to conduct the campaign, we should probably have a costly object lesson in the difference between African and European warfare." Reflections of that sort, even if true, are not likely to be of much service. The reflections upon Lord Kitchener caused a good deal of resentment among the people; but the mischief was done. The disquiet had arisen and gained ground.

There was one other cause of disquiet. Something had interfered with the production of munitions in the required quantities. Suggestions were thrown out that

\* As I have already pointed out, the shortage of high explosive shell was, at least to some extent, attributable to the generals in the field; and it is clear that the loss of "hundreds of thousands of British lives" (which, as a fact, had not then been sacrificed) was more due to the poor tactical handling of the troops than to any other factor.

the real cause of the deficiency was lack of labour, spasmodic labour, grudging labour owing to drink. Mr. Lloyd George voiced these suggestions in a speech on the last day of February at Bangor. Exactly a month later a deputation of shipbuilding employers urged upon Mr. Lloyd George the closing of public houses and clubs in areas where munitions of war were being produced. In reply, Mr. Lloyd George said, "We are fighting Germany, Austria, and drink; and so far as I can see, the greatest of these three deadly foes is drink." This charge was hotly denied by representatives of the labouring classes; but there was, perhaps, just as much a basis of truth in it as in the charges against Lord Kitchener. At any rate, it was a feeling widely spread; and on the day after the deputation was received, the King made an offer to Mr. Lloyd George to set an example for the kingdom. "If it be deemed advisable," the letter of Lord Stamfordham ran, "the King will be prepared to set the example by giving up all alcoholic liquor himself, and issuing orders against its consumption in the Royal household, so that no difference shall be made, so far as His Majesty is concerned, between the treatment of rich and poor in this question." Later on the offer was actually fulfilled, and Lord Kitchener followed the example; but it never secured any wide following. Mr. Lloyd George introduced a scheme for dealing with the liquor traffic as a whole; but it secured so little support, and came up against so much opposition, that it had to be abandoned.

All these disturbing elements had their root in failure. If the Allies had been marching to Berlin all would have been well. The actual state of things was far otherwise. Russia in May was falling back rapidly in Galicia before the Germans and Austrians. The Dardanelles seemed to be settling down into a trench war similar to that in France; and whereas mere holding was fulfilling a practical end in France, it was quite useless in the Dardanelles. The long-looked-for spring offensive had achieved little. Something appeared to be badly wrong. If the Dardanelles was not being forced, then it was merely a useless waste of life. Mr. Churchill was popularly supposed to be the true scapegoat for the situation. The shells question was of deeper import; and the agitation against Lord Kitchener was, there is good reason for thinking, largely due to the fact that he persisted in voluntary recruitment instead of resorting to conscription, which was the policy of many politicians and of the group of newspapers of which we have spoken. Lord Kitchener about this time drew down upon himself more and more violent censure from the same group of newspapers by raising the recruiting age to forty years. The ratio of unmarried to married men at that age is very small, and the inference that, as unmarried men would not come forward, the married must be called upon seemed to some people little short of a crime. The *Daily Mail*, after the first issue, refused to publish the advertisement.

In the midst of this seething mass of unrest, when the uneasiness was at its height and Lord Kitchener was being made the scapegoat for a very complex state of affairs which touched him only at one point, it suddenly became known that Lord Fisher had resigned. On Saturday, 15th May, it became known that he had not only resigned, but had refused to reconsider his decision. It was assumed, and correctly,\* that the reason of his step was something greater even than the ques-

\* Lord Fisher explains in his book, *Memories*, p. 83, that after a meeting of the War Council on 14th May, Mr. Churchill drafted orders for further naval reinforcements for the Dardanelles. Lord Fisher could not assent to a course which, in effect, meant that his project for forcing the Baltic could never be carried out.



tion of the Dardanelles, and concerned the whole problem of the relations of the First Lord to the First Sea Lord. Upon that question there could hardly be two opinions, and opinion was almost completely unanimous that Lord Fisher should be prevailed upon to return to the Admiralty with complete power of disposition of ships and their general organisation. It must be fairly stated that the panic felt at the retiral of Lord Fisher was largely due to a misconception. Soldiers of the first rank came to be known by the public to some extent ; but it is one of the conditions of work of the navy that its functions are performed in secret, and very few of the splendid collection of first-rate officers are ever widely known. Before the war, for instance, very few people indeed knew of the existence of Sir John Jellicoe. The departure from the Admiralty of Lord Fisher was not, therefore, the terrible blow it seemed ; but it brought a number of different movements of disquiet and uneasiness to a focus. There was the even more important question of shells. It was felt by the Opposition that there should either be a full discussion of these and other kindred topics, or that they should be admitted to a more intimate knowledge of affairs. This was, according to the *Daily Chronicle*, simply a question of blackmail ; but it was hardly a claim that could be ignored. And under its urgency the Liberal Government, which had been so long in power and had produced much admittedly beneficent legislation, came to an end.

The formation of a Coalition, or "National," Government came as a great surprise almost to every one. Two days before the famous dispatch of the *Times'* correspondent, on 12th May, Mr. Handel Booth asked Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons whether he would "consider the desirability of admitting into the ranks of Ministers leading members of the various political parties." The reply was sufficiently definite. "The step suggested by my right honourable friend is not in contemplation, and I am not aware that it would meet with general assent." Three days later Lord Fisher had resigned, and the prospect of a Coalition Ministry became at once a practical question. The actions of the next few days are not yet fully known. They were watched with intense interest by every one, but few indeed knew how they were shaping. On 18th May the *Pall Mall Gazette* announced that a Coalition was in process of formation, and on the following day Mr. Asquith stated in Parliament that "steps are in contemplation which will involve the reconstruction of the Government on a broader personal and political basis. . . . I wish, here and now, to make clear to everybody three things. The first is, that any change that takes place will not affect the offices of the head of the Government or the Foreign Secretary, which will continue to be held as they are now. The second is, that there is absolutely no change of any kind in contemplation in the policy of the country in regard to the continued prosecution of the war with all possible energy and by every available resource. The third and last point . . . is this: Any reconstruction that may be made will be for the purposes of the war alone, and is not to be taken in any quarter or for any reason as indicating anything in the nature of surrender or compromise on the part of any person or body of persons of their several political purposes and ideals."

That statement, with its vague suggestion, and its rather cryptic final clause, was to many people the very first hint of any change, and there can be no doubt that a very great number heard it with the greatest anxiety. It was felt that the question of shells and of the relations of the heads of the Admiralty, vital as they might be, were but small and easy to compass as compared with this upheaval of

the whole administration. A Coalition Government would command the loyalty of no one necessarily, and in its formation it was really an abandoning of democratic rule altogether. Mr. Asquith's *coup d'état* was admitted by no Liberal as a necessity. A number of men who had done good service had to be jettisoned, and others, who had no mandate from the people, were to be included. With the party system the democratic system had fallen through, since so far as the country could speak it had spoken in favour of the Government which had passed. Yet the party system still existed for one thing, and that was to levy its share of public monies. This was clear from the cynical plans for pushing Mr. Campbell, the brilliant Irish Unionist barrister, into a high judicial appointment in Ireland. It was not that he in any way helped the Government in that position. The Nationalists could not be expected to like him; and the Home Rule Bill had been passed. What did it mean? For some little time there seemed a deadlock over the question. It was in fact a mere cynical party claim to half the spoils of public appointments. At length a way out was found by appointing Mr. Campbell to a judgeship. The party must have its booty somehow. There is no question of one person rather than another. But the party system had never seemed so cynical a thing as in this sharing of offices.

On Tuesday, 25th May, the Constitution of the new Coalition Cabinet was announced. It was the first Coalition in later British history. The positions seem to have been portioned out on the rough ratio of parties, the Liberals retaining the Premiership, the Foreign Secretaryship, the Lord Chancellorship, and the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Mr. Redmond refused to take a seat in the Cabinet, but it was understood he insisted that Mr. Birrell should remain Irish Secretary. Its constitution is worthy of note. The personnel, it is said, was decided upon by a Committee of Liberal and Conservative leaders, who arranged which Ministers should be taken into the Cabinet and who should be asked to resign. Sir Edward Grey, oddly enough, was not a member of the committee of selection. The Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury remained as before, Mr. Asquith. The Lord Chancellorship was given to Sir Stanley Buckmaster in place of Lord Haldane, a change which no one can have thought advantageous in law, and the vast majority of Liberals believed to be disastrous in general policy. Lord Curzon came into the Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal. Lord Crewe remained Lord President of the Council. The Chancellorship went to Mr. M'Kenna, a former Liberal Chancellor, in place of Mr. Lloyd George, who went to the newly created Ministry of Munitions. Sir John Simon, the late Attorney-General, became Secretary for Home Affairs in place of Mr. M'Kenna. Mr. Bonar Law, the leader of the Opposition, made his first acquaintance with the Cabinet as Secretary for the Colonies. Mr. Chamberlain became Secretary for India. Lord Kitchener and Sir Edward Grey retained their positions as Secretary for War and Foreign Affairs respectively. Mr. Balfour succeeded Mr. Churchill at the Admiralty; Mr. Runciman became President of the Board of Trade; Mr. Long succeeded Mr. Herbert Samuel as President of the Local Government Board; Mr. Churchill remained in the Cabinet as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Mr. Birrell remained Secretary for Ireland, as Mr. M'Kinnon Wood for Scotland. Lord Selborne entered the Cabinet as President of the Board of Agriculture. Mr. Harcourt remained First Commissioner of Works. Mr. Henderson, the Chairman of the Labour Party, entered the Cabinet as President of the Board of Education in place of Mr. Pease, who received a political pension of £1,200. The new Attorney-General was Sir Edward Carson.



These positions cannot be considered to have been particularly well assorted, with the exception of those which remained unchanged. To many it seemed an odd thing to place at the head of the law the barrister who had been the moving spirit in Ulster; and this was pressed home by the appointment of Sir F. E. Smith as Solicitor-General. It had been said that Mr. Balfour not only sympathised with Mr. Churchill's policy at the Admiralty, but was even closely associated with him. It may have been this that accounted for the fact that Lord Fisher refused to return to the Admiralty, though he returned later as head of the Inventions Board. In his place was appointed one of the many able men in the navy, Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, F.R.S., a notable man of science. As a whole, the Cabinet was probably as strong as Coalition Cabinets can be. It contained an odd mixture of views and policies, and there was some strange looseness of speech noticeable as the various Ministers came to their opportunities in their several positions. Thus, more or less outspoken preferences for Conscription were expressed by Mr. Long and Lord Lansdowne, and the Registration Bill of the former was regarded by some as a step towards Conscription, although others saw in it a sop instead of that measure.

Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bonar Law explained to a large meeting of the Unionist party in both Houses of Parliament, held at the Carlton Club on 27th May, the reasons which had led them to agree to join a Coalition Government. The necessity for airing criticism which might be extremely damaging to the common cause had made the Unionist leaders feel that there must be a change of some sort. It was just as they had come to this conclusion that Mr. Bonar Law received from Mr. Asquith the following letter, which he read to the meeting :—

“DEAR MR. BONAR LAW,—After long and careful consideration I have definitely come to the conclusion that the conduct of the war to a successful and decisive issue cannot be effectively carried on except by a Cabinet which represents all parties in the State. I need not enter into the reasons, sufficiently obvious, which point to this as the best solution, in the interests of the country, of the problems which the war now presents; nor does the recognition of its necessity involve any disparagement on my part of the splendid service which, in their several spheres, my colleagues have rendered to the Empire in this great and trying emergency. My colleagues have placed their resignations in my hands, and I am, therefore, in a position to invite you and those who are associated with you to join forces with us in a combined administration in which I should also ask the leaders of the Irish and Labour parties to participate, whose common action, without prejudice to the future prosecution of our various and divergent political purposes, should be exclusively directed to the issues of war.”

After consideration, Mr. Bonar Law sent, with the unanimous approval of his colleagues, the following reply: “The considerations to which you refer have for some time been present to the mind of Lord Lansdowne and myself. We have now communicated your views and your invitation to our colleagues, and we shall be glad to co-operate with you in your endeavour to form a National Government.”

It is probable that these letters have reference to larger affairs than the mere differences in the conduct of two vital offices. The leaders of the political parties had probably come to the conclusion that the war, if pressed to a successful issue, would inevitably make calls upon the country for some years—perhaps a generation

—to come. In such circumstances it would, indeed, be only fitting that, so far as possible, the nation, and not a single political party in it, should have control of its future destinies. These other things, which had no doubt been the occasion of the change, were probably symptomatic of a general feeling for a second breath. The war was not over. There was no sign of an immediate offensive on the Allies' part which would bring the end in sight. The war stretched out an infinite vista of blood and treasure outpoured to secure the world's liberties; and, if there was any truth in such a conception, the whole nation must settle down to its burden.

Mr. Asquith himself expressed this point of view when he made his personal explanation in Parliament upon 15th June. "The situation is without a parallel in our history. The demand which it makes and which it will continue to make upon the energy and the patriotism of the nation, and, in a wholly exceptional degree, upon the patience and the foresight of those who are responsible for its government, and I will add—a most vital consideration—upon the confidence felt by the one in the other, cannot be measured by any precedent. . . . What is the personality of this man or that? What does it mean? What does it come to? A supreme cause is at stake. We have each and all of us, I do not care who we are or what we are, we have, each and all of us, to respond with whatever we have, with whatever we can give, and, what is harder still, with whatever we can sacrifice to the dominating and inexorable call." The other aspect of the question was explained in more personal if not so inspiring language.

"I have," he said, "during the last three weeks, with the approval of the King, reconstructed the personnel of the Government. Let me say at once, in the plainest possible terms, that I should not have been justified in doing what I have done under the pressure of any outside influence, of any temporary embarrassment, or of any transient Parliamentary exigency. The task, which I am sure the House will realise, was as unwelcome—I would go further—was as repugnant a task as could fall to the lot of any man. I have a deep, an abiding, and an ineffaceable sense of gratitude to the colleagues who, under the stress of new and unforeseen responsibility, for the best part of ten months discharged with undeviating loyalty, and in my judgment with unexemplified efficiency, the heaviest load which has ever fallen upon the shoulders of British statesmen. No body of men, in my deliberate judgment, could have done more or could have done better, and there is not one of them to whom I, as the head of the Government, and I think the nation at large, does not stand under a permanent debt of obligation. (Cheers.) To part with them, or with any of them, has been the severest and most painful experience of my public life. I should like, Sir, if I may, to add this. I ask not only my old colleagues, but my friends and supporters to accept my assurance, if indeed any assurance is needed, that there is not a man among them who is more faithful than I to the great principles of public policy which, during the best part of thirty years, have been to me the aim, the inspiration, the moulding, and governing power of such services as I have been able to render to the State. I recede from nothing. I abandon nothing. I sacrifice nothing. What I have held in the past I hold to-day as strongly and tenaciously as I have ever done; what in the future, if I have any future, I shall work for and fight for with whatever remains to me, I need not say, of conviction, of faith, of hope, of energy, and of vital force. . . . The claim which I make for myself I put forward with an equal measure of assurance for my new colleagues who, in the same temper



and spirit, felt it their duty to respond to my invitation to associate themselves in a supreme national crisis with life-long antagonists."

The whole history of the crisis will probably not be known for many years. Certainly there were elements in it which, to say the least, are not the best elements of democracy. The Coalition Government entered upon its tenure with feelings of bitterness and bewilderment among the dominant political power. There was a show of great activity in many departments; but, with the exception of Mr. Lloyd George, who has an abnormal power of stimulus, it is probable that things went on much as before. A strong Inventions Board was formed for the Admiralty, and much good work was done. Munitions were certainly produced in larger quantities; and at any rate, short of a general election, an unthinkable procedure in such a crisis, probably no expedient would have given the air of finality to the administration better than the Coalition Ministry.

## XII. THE RECOVERY OF LEMBERG.

PRZEMYSL fell on the morning of 3rd June, or rather it was evacuated then. The Grand Duke Nicholas had withdrawn everything which could be of any use to the enemy before surrendering the position. At once the German armies were on the move, with vigorous thrusts east and north-east, towards Lemberg. One cannot but admire the untiring will which pressed on and on in spite of terrible losses; and our admiration is not lessened by the reflection that the Germans had to *fight* on. They had as yet secured nothing which would keep them immune from a vigorous Russian offensive if they withdrew any material part of their forces for service elsewhere. They set themselves determinedly to continue the chase of that will-o'-the-wisp—a military decision against the Russian armies.

On 1st June, after repeated reverses, von Linsingen secured Stryj. He pressed his advance with great vigour towards Zydaczow, which lies below the junction of the Stryj River with the Dniester. His objective was the Dniester line at Mikolajow, directly south of Lemberg. The re-occupation of Przemyśl was, in effect, a straightening and strengthening of the Russian line, in so far as the dangerous salient had been evacuated. The Russian positions now ran behind Przemyśl from the positions on the east of the San, and curved past Hussakow and Drohobycz to the north of Stryj, and thence on to the Dniester. This river had to be crossed to make the attack on Lemberg from the south at all serious. The Austro-Hungarian forces pressed forward on the San from Seniawa and along the Przemyśl-Lemberg railway from Mosciska. There are no serious obstacles in this direction until the lake and marshland about Grodek is reached. That the advance here was not more rapid is more astonishing than that the Austro-Germans advanced effectively. Away to the far east an Austrian offensive had forced the Russian lines back from the Pruth to the Dniester, and the enemy made a few skirmishing reconnaissances in Bessarabia. The only effect of any value was the imposition of an Austrian force between the Russians and the Rumanian frontier.

The main crossings of the Dniester at Zurawno were captured by Linsingen on 6th June. This was a skilful blow, for it made the Russian resistance farther east less effective, and three days later the important junction of Stanislaw fell into the

hands of the enemy, who pressed on towards Halicz. Two days after Linsingen had forced the Dniester at Zurawno he was attacked with great vigour, and after a three days' battle thrown back across the river completely. The Russians even crossed the river, and retook the town of Zurawno; but later they evacuated it and contented themselves by holding the bridgehead on the northern side. But they had succeeded in capturing nearly 16,000 officers and men, 78 machine guns, and 17 cannon. The Germans had advanced with more valour than discretion, and in their retreat lost cohesion, leaving behind all sorts of material, even kitchens, arms, and ammunition. It was about this time that the Russians reported that, on a front of forty miles, the enemy had lost between 120,000 and 150,000 men. Such huge numbers as these show that the losses upon the entire front must have been enormous; and an impartial observer might have wondered how far such successes as the Germans had achieved were worth the terrible and irreparable wastage.

The advance against Lemberg gave no sign that such reflections had any following in the German Staff or, at any rate, any effect upon them. Lemberg was, of course, a more important prize than Przemysl. Morally and politically its recapture was of greater worth than the dismantled fortress. Lemberg was one of the most important cities of Austria-Hungary, and politically the chief town of Galicia. It was, moreover, the centre of the most highly organised railway system in any part of Galicia, and in effect the key to Eastern Galicia. In it centred the two arteries which ran from the Russian bases. Directly or indirectly, it was in communication with no fewer than twelve lines, and these gave the army which held it the power to reinforce or divert troops through so many channels. Its strength in communications was such that upon the Grodek position, which defended Lemberg from the west, no fewer than five lines fell, five means of transferring troops from one spot to another more intimately threatened. The spirit which carried the German armies through Galicia was reinforced by numerous motives to secure Lemberg.

The Grodek position was one of great natural strength. Some sixteen or seventeen miles from Lemberg there lies a string of lakes with marshland about and between them. The town of Grodek is virtually a causeway in a long stretch of swamp, which may be conceived as simply more fluid at the points where it forms what are called lakes. This causeway is the line of the main highroad through Galicia to Lemberg. The main railway line makes its way by a more northerly break in the marshland, the limits of which are the Dniester marshes and the town of Janow on the Jaworow railway. The attempts to cross the Dniester have their meaning in this. The line was almost impregnable from the west, and the enemy was therefore bound to make the attempt to turn it. He made this manœuvre both from the north and from the south. The latter never seems to have caused the Russians much trouble. There was severe fighting at Komarno; but this did not affect the turn of affairs. The vulnerable point of the position was the north; and it had other incidental attractions besides the forcing of the Grodek line. The railway line which runs from Lemberg to the railhead at Tomaszow has, as its only defence, a line of low hills on its western face; but if the railway could be cut the Germans had the chance of hampering the retreat of the Russians by a threat of envelopment.

Mackensen's advance was pressed with great vigour towards the Tomaszow-Lem-



berg railway. By mid-June, however, he had only reached the line defined by the town of Lubaczow and the village of Krakowiec. Compare this advance of a few miles in some twelve days with the advance of about ninety miles in the first fortnight of May, and it will be realised that some extraordinary change had taken place in the circumstances of both armies. The main and governing factor of the advance from the Donajetz was the extraordinary accumulation of artillery; but the line of such an advance was obviously conditioned by the problem of moving such heavy pieces. When the line of advance left the railway, artillery, at the mercy of road or motor transport, could not move as quickly nor be as well served. Lubaczow is on the branch line from Jaroslav to Rava Russka; but Krakowiec is in a country



The Operations for the Recapture of Lemberg. The black line shows the position taken up by the Russians to cover the place.

which lacks even good roads. The conditions being more equal for both armies, the advance was contested at every step. Indeed, each step proved most costly. The battle about Lubaczow was a fierce encounter, and the Russian lines were forced only when the wearied infantry had broken down under the fatigue of continuous fighting for weeks. The lines, when pierced, were not carried immediately, for an impetuous charge of Russian cavalry drove the whole line back some distance behind the town, and destroyed almost the whole of a German regiment. The pursuit was kept up until the line of the German reserves was reached, and the blow caused such confusion that a day was required to re-form before advancing.

Worse mishaps befell new attempts to force the Russian position from the south.

The Austro-Germans managed to get across the Dniester again above Stryj, and farther east about Zurawno and Nizniow; but in counter-attacks on the 14th June, and the two days following, they suffered a severe check. About Stryj they were thrown back in disorder; above Zurawno nearly 9,000 prisoners were taken in a sharp reverse, and such was the disorder in falling back that again quantities of material fell into the hands of the Russians. Above Nizniow the whole of the force which had crossed the river was destroyed, and lower down the advance was checked. In the middle of June, then, a survey brought more than a little consolation to the Allies.

Mackensen, however, extended the line of his advance and penetrated Russian territory west of the San about Tarnograd. By the 18th he had forced the Russians back on a broad front from the Russian frontier to the Dniester. On the following day he was fighting in the neighbourhood of Rava Ruska, Grodek, and Komarno. Above and below these points fierce attacks were delivered, but their success was not sufficient to weaken the Russian resistance upon the main front. By 20th June the Germans and Austrians had pressed back the Russians to about Zolkiew and Janow, and the Grodek position was virtually turned from the north. Assailed on all sides, north, west, and south, the Russians abandoned the Grodek lines and fell back towards Lemberg. Rava Ruska and Zolkiew fell, and the Germans made a general advance. There was now no defence line west of Lemberg, but the city was not evacuated yet. Zolkiew is almost due north, yet the extraordinary inertia of the Russian soldiery could not be overcome at once. On the Dniester more fierce and bloody engagements took place, more prisoners fell into the Russian hands; and on the main front even the German reports could find nothing approaching success.

Fighting was continued all through the night of 21st-22nd June, and the Austrians and Germans made their advance at a snail's pace. At five o'clock in the morning they were attacking Rzesna, four miles north-west of the city. The Germans were advancing from Zolkiew and took Kulikow. The Austrians were bringing their forces to bear against the stream Szczercz, and they stormed the position of Szczezek on the river during the night. As General Boehm Ermolli had forced the line of Grodek three days before, the delay was presumably caused by the necessity of bringing up his heavy artillery. When the Russians found their lines broken on the west and north-west of the city, they withdrew, and General Boehm Ermolli entered Lemberg at four o'clock in the afternoon of 22nd June, after it had been nearly ten months in Russian hands.

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The recapture of Lemberg was the subject of renewed jubilation in Germany and Austria. The Kaiser congratulated the Emperor Francis Joseph, the Archduke Friedrich, whom he appointed a Prussian Field Marshal, the soldiers; the Emperor congratulated the Kaiser, the Archduke, the soldiers. But though the city had been recaptured it was evacuated in perfect order. The city was left intact, but there was no booty. Nothing was destroyed by the Russians except the roads which gave any advantage to the enemy. A general regrouping of the armies and a readjustment of the Russian lines took place. Two days after the fall of Lemberg, Sandomierz was evacuated and the Russian line drawn back into Poland. The success of the Germans had still related only to the possession of territory, or rather the repossession of conquered territory. For in the mood of depression aroused by the continued German advance, this was a point generally lost sight of.





After the Recapture of Lemberg.

The Central Powers had regained almost the whole of Galicia, and, as a consequence, had turned the Russians out of the territory; but their main object was still before them. The Russian armies were still intact, and while they remained so the German stroke had failed of its main effect. They knew perfectly well, although non-military opinion generally missed or doubted the point, that so sure as they desisted from the attack or withdrew any considerable part of their force for service elsewhere, the Russians would again begin to move against them. For a considerable time now, since the recapture of Jaroslav, the initiative had been partially regained by the Russians—that is to say, the Russians had recovered the power of controlling their movements. They no longer moved when the enemy wished. Their battles were bargains. They exacted full price, and then, when it seemed better, they fell back. In a war of attrition this was clearly fulfilling the essential demands of the situation. It may be asked why they did not go forward if they had recovered the power of initiative, and this was the doubt which poisoned civilian opinion so much at the time. But the answer to such a question involves an insistence upon the fact that the only essential end of war is the defeat of the armies of an enemy. In so far as that is achieved, and by killing your enemy you are ever marching forward in that direction, whether geographically you march forward or backward, the main end of the war is secured. And for the time Russia had not the men and munitions to compel the enemy armies to conform to her movements, though she had for some time recovered the power to direct the lines of their advance.

That Germany realised the condition of affairs fully is shown by the fact that she proceeded to readjust her armies and march on, and the next phases in this terrific struggle became in every way of engrossing interest. In their advance the enemy were now embarking upon the attack of positions about the strategic value of which many volumes have been written. Up to this point even conservative estimates of the losses of the Austro-German armies must put the figure at about a quarter of a million.\* It is probable that counting sick, wounded, prisoners, and dead, nearly that number were *hors de combat* at the moment and for some time. The loss is not adequately enumerated by that alone. The accumulation of months of artillery—new guns—and ammunition had been in use for nearly two months at an unprecedented rate, and the reserves of ammunition had been shot away. On the credit side were the Russian loss of, perhaps, fifty per cent. more men, the loss of much material—rifles, guns, and equipment—and the moral and political effects caused by the continued advance. Wavering States were made to waver still more. At home there can be no doubt a mood of optimism and confidence in final victory arose which was as strong as the corresponding wave of depression which swept over the Allies. The Hungarian harvests, as the corn now ripening demonstrated, were secured to the Germanic Powers. Petrol and oil, most necessary commodities, also fell once more into their hands. These were tangible gains; and the failures which the soldier alone truly appreciated, and the clouds in the background which only the trained eye could see, could not counterbalance them either at home or abroad. But the siege of the Germanic armies was not raised, and that was the final and fatal condition.

\* Falkenhayn puts the Austro-German "fighting troops" in Galicia and the Bukovina, at the end of April, at 699,000 men. With subsidiary services and recruit formations the total cannot have been much less than double that number.



## XIII. THE CONQUEST OF GERMAN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA.

IN the second week of July, when the war seemed to be going most against the Allies, Great Britain heard with much enthusiasm of the surrender of the German colony of South-West Africa. In Europe the sky was never more clouded. Civilian opinion was never more depressed probably since the war began, at any rate since the German advance upon Paris. The Germanic armies had recovered almost the whole of Galicia, and were attacking the Ivangorod-Rovno railway, which was, in effect, the key to Warsaw and the whole of the Vistula position. On the West there was little movement, certainly nothing comparable to that vast series of movements by which the Germans had compelled the Russian evacuation of Galicia. The Dardanelles situation, which least of all was meant to be static, seemed to have made little progress. Italy was not making the vast spectacular advances which alone seem to impress the populace. People had grown tired of local successes, however important these might be, and a great success like the completion of the conquest of a vast German colony, if it had been treated as the Germans treated even the most minor successes, would have done a great deal to raise the prevailing depression. That it had much less effect than it might have had seems to have been due to a deliberate policy, adopted by a number of well-known English newspapers, of emphasising everything which went against the Allies. Thus, on the day upon which the surrender of German South-West Africa was announced, though there was also reported an important Russian strategic victory, and there was a favourable report from France, one of the most important newspapers produced as a bill the announcement of a British defeat *at Aden*, where a handful of troops had fallen back in face of superior forces.

The conquest of the German colony did not, therefore, arouse the same enthusiasm which it would have done in happier days, or indeed in days when newspapers had not embarked upon the strange career of diminishing the moral of the people for their own ends. Yet it was an extraordinary feat which Generals Botha and Smuts had accomplished. General Smuts had organised and equipped the expeditionary force, part of which he was later to command. As we have seen, the progress of the expedition was hindered at the outset by the treachery of a few resentful spirits, who contrived to collect around them considerable numbers. It was owing to this that the occupation of Lüderitz Bay on 18th September was not followed by any further operations until 16th January, when Swakopmund, the northern terminus of the railway system of the colony, was seized. But the operations were not pressed until the last sparks of the rising in the Union of South Africa had been crushed out.

Even after the end of Beyers and the taking of De Wet, Wessel Wessels, and N. Serfontein, Kemp and Maritz still held out. These two men with their following were, however, thoroughly beaten on 24th January, at Upington, by a Union force under the command of Commandant Van Deventer, and ten days later the rebellion was at an end. Maritz did not surrender with the rest, and his fate was a mystery even after the surrender of German South-West Africa.

General Botha took command of the expeditionary force in the field on the last day of the year, but the operations were not pressed until after Kemp's surrender. Walfish Bay, which had been occupied by the Germans on 11th September, had been

reoccupied by the Union troops on Christmas Day. By 16th January the entries to the colony from the sea were all in the hands of the Union forces, and in February the methodical invasion began. What this implies we can only know in barest outline. When the war broke out in Europe, the Union Defence Act, which was the



Map to illustrate the Capture of Windhoek.

framework upon which an efficient army was to be built, had had no chance of effecting anything. There were probably not 5,000 trained men available in the Union territories. The machinery of the Defence Act, again, was not even allowed a fair chance after the outbreak of the war, since the Union found itself almost at the outset called upon to deal with a rebellion which must have involved about



6,500 men. It is clear, then, that the Union Government, even while it was dealing with the rebellion, was ably organising and equipping the large force which eventually appeared in German South-West Africa. The chief actor in this part of the drama was General Smuts, the brilliant thinker and organiser, who had loyally stuck to his chief through thick and thin. It was the caustic letter of Smuts which tore aside the flimsy pretexts of the traitorous Beyers; it was his extraordinary resourcefulness which prepared an army of some 50,000 men, equipped them with everything necessary for the particular campaign in hand, arranged transport by land and sea, so that there was not a hitch or a just complaint anywhere.

The plan of operations comprised a big sweeping movement across the whole of the southern part of the colony. Brigadier-General Van Deventer, who had put Maritz and Kemp to flight, was in command of a force based upon the Orange River, which was to march thence towards the railway from Lüderitz Bay. Colonel Berrange from Kuruman directed his march via Rietfontein towards where the railway curves to the north, parallel to the coast. General Sir Duncan Mackenzie was to sweep due east along the railway. The three forces, therefore, were parts of a huge sweeping movement, converging upon Keetmanshoop. General Botha had landed at Swakopmund with the northern force of three brigades on 12th February. Each of the forces was soon in motion. The danger against which they had to guard was an attack of a column by the total force of the enemy, whose tactics were to destroy the railway after him, fill in the wells, and leave as little that would be of value to the Union force as possible. The difficulties of the advance were of a terrible kind. The imperative need of water caused the columns to march up river beds as far as possible; but there the transport wagons stuck in the mud, and were only extricated with difficulty. When there were roads they were hard and uneven. There were wild beasts to break the monotony of a perpetual struggle with inanimate nature, and a multitude of insects. The country was so barren that almost everything had to be carried by the transport. Much of the water was shipped from South Africa, and more was made in huge stills. At times goods were bought from the German civilians, and either money or Government receipts were given. One of the dangers which caused the greatest number of casualties was land mines, which the Germans left in profusion. Frequently these were laid near water, and the suffering horses and thirsty men marched to the water with haste, only to be waved back frequently, and sometimes to suffer for their hardihood.

On leaving their bases on the sea the troops were given biscuits and coffee for two days, and it was a long time before they got more. The difficulties of travelling in such inhospitable country were enormous. There were no such things as vegetables to be obtained, and the men found the want of salt a considerable handicap. Driven to feed upon flesh food without vegetables or salt, it is extraordinary that disease did not break out. Horses and mules fell by the way, and the men suffered extremely if they sustained even a slight scratch, and in riding through hard bush country it was impossible to avoid cuts and scratches which produced bad sores. The heat was terrible, and thirst became a torture. The dust blinded and choked the men as they rode. Veils were tried, but they held the dust, and the men's breath coagulated it to form a firm cake of earth. Travelling by night meant that one went from the extreme of heat to that of cold. The men felt the hardship of travelling without lights of any sort, even those of their pipes. Not to smoke is oftentimes the greatest of privations for a soldier; and so it was in these night marches.

Headway was slow at first. Garub was occupied on 19th February. A month later Botha's force, advancing along the northern arm of the railway, came into collision with the Germans at Pforteberg, sixty miles from Swakopmund, captured 200 prisoners and some guns, and drove him towards the east. A few days later the southern forces began to make more rapid headway. Mackenzie took Aus (30th March), a town on the southern branch of the railway, and five days later Van Deventer captured Warmbad, the railhead nearest the Union territory. On 20th April Van Deventer occupied Keetmanshoop, which is nearly 150 miles from Warmbad. At Keetmanshoop Van Deventer was quickly joined by Mackenzie's and Berrange's forces, and the whole turned north, under the command of General Smuts. Part of Mackenzie's force of mounted troops here left the railway, and sweeping across country, through Bethany and Beersheba, reached Gibeon on 26th April and took 200 prisoners. The surprise was not quite complete, since the German force had travelled by rail, and the main body escaped. Botha's advance, meanwhile, was being hindered by the methods of his enemy. He called the attention of the German commander to the fact that his practice of poisoning the wells was contrary to the customs of civilised warfare; and he stated that he would hold those in charge responsible for it. The practice, it is satisfactory to remark, ceased.

On 5th May Botha's troops entered Karibib, and seven days later he entered Windhuk, the capital of the colony. His entry was not resisted. His advance guards had pressed their way eastward and south from Karibib, and he himself followed with his Staff later by motor car. The capital had been transferred to Grootfontein in the north, and the handing over of Windhuk was arranged by telephone from Okahandya. The actual entry into the capital at noon on 12th May was imposing, as the General was escorted by the Union forces. From the steps of the Court House a Proclamation was read in English, Dutch, and German. Then the Union Jack was hoisted and arms were presented. General Botha congratulated the troops on their great achievement, and reminded those under Colonel Mentz, who were to occupy the capital, of their responsibility. There were about 3,000 Europeans and 12,000 natives in the town. The new high power wireless station had been left practically intact, and there was much rolling stock captured.

The forces halted to rest and refit at Windhuk. The men were tired out by constant marching under terrible conditions. Men and horses each badly needed rest. Some of the men's flesh was in ribbons. Their blood had got out of order through the meat diet, lack of salt and vegetables, and scratches and cuts had spread. Their clothing was in rags, and it was necessary to halt Botha's force and thoroughly rest and refit it. When the men were refreshed and ready to move again, they turned north along the railway which runs to Otavi and Grootfontein. General Botha with his Staff advanced along the railway, while Britz and Myburgh marched ahead with flanking columns, one on each side of the railway line. The line of advance covered nearly a hundred miles in a vast sweeping movement, and the troops rapidly passed town after town upon the railway, driving the enemy before them. The marches had to be arranged so that a water hole could be reached and captured. It was a most hazardous adventure, since water was so necessary that failure to take a hole meant an enforced return to the last well on the road. The last section of the advance upon Otavi was remarkable for its swiftness. Britz left Okaputu at 6.30 P.M., and marched through the night, reaching Otavi, forty-five miles distant, in thirty-six hours without resting or stopping. The last few miles



were of the nature of a running fight. Myburgh began the last section of the advance on Otavi at the same time as General Maien Botha, but from a point six miles south of Okaputu. He reached Otavi after twenty hours' continuous marching—another of the extraordinary achievements of the Union force. Otavi was occupied on 1st July. Brigadier-Generals Myburgh and Britz were sent forward at once—Britz to sweep the country to the west up to the Namutoni, at the head of the Great Etosha lake, and Myburgh to occupy the railhead at Tsumeb. Britz came into contact with the Germans at Namutoni on 6th July, took 150 prisoners and released the English prisoners, and cut off all chance of a withdrawal into the Portuguese colony of Angola. Myburgh marched north, after occupying Gaub on 4th July, and took Tsumeb, where he captured 750 prisoners. He pursued the enemy, and captured another 500 prisoners. Botha had driven the main German force to bay between Otavi and Tsumeb, where they lay entrenched across the railway line. But Britz was now sweeping round from the west, and the Germans were shut in by a circle of British troops. Botha thereupon sent an ultimatum demanding unconditional surrender by 5 o'clock on the following day. The Germans, after an abortive attempt to make terms, gave in, and the terms of surrender were signed at Kilo on the railway on 8th July. The total of the German personnel which surrendered amounted to 3,497, of whom 204 were officers; and the surrender was signed by the Imperial German Governor, Dr. Seitz, and Lieutenant-Colonel Franks, the commander of the German forces. A German mine detachment at once began the methodical removal of the mines which had been laid down all over the colony. The total invading force was about 50,000, of whom 27,500 were British; and the total casualties amounted to 1,189, 140 representing the deaths from all causes.

The achievement of General Botha in thus overrunning so large a territory in so short a time was probably unique in history. In praising his men he said: "The surrounding movement by the Union troops, which preceded the surrender of the Germans, was a highly successful piece of combined work under particularly difficult conditions, and all the Staffs deserve the greatest credit for it. The main feature of the last operations has been the incessant marching by day and night over great distances at great speed without water. . . . To the infantry, which, after splendid marches, arrived in time to complete the encircling movement, all praise is due. The marches performed by one and all deserve to rank highly as military achievements, while the spirit and endurance of the men who have done the work should cause the Union justifiable pride in its soldiers." This was warm praise, and it was well deserved.

General Botha became one of the most popular figures in the British Empire. Lord Kitchener invited him to accompany the South African force which had been offered for service in France; but when Botha, most prudently seeing that he was more necessary in South Africa than in Europe, refused, the message of the War Minister was re-edited by the Press Bureau to invite only the South African force, the word "you" being omitted. "I am anxious to express to you, on behalf of the Army, our sincere admiration of the masterly conduct by you of the campaign in German South-West Africa, and to offer you and your force our cordial congratulations on your brilliant victory. We shall warmly welcome you and the South Africans who can come over to join us."

The invitation was an error. Botha had completed the conquest of South-West Africa at a critical moment. The trial of De Wet for high treason had been but

recently concluded with the sentence of six years' imprisonment and a fine of two thousand pounds. Hertzogite influences had been gaining ground in the Union. Botha's return with enhanced prestige was, perhaps, the most apt event which could have happened for the future destinies of the Union. He was the most popular man in South Africa. When he reached Cape Town on 22nd July, the city was gay with flags, and, despite the rain, the streets were filled with cheering crowds. The Mayor welcomed General Botha at the City Hall, and asked him to accept, on behalf of the Town Council, a sword of honour, inscribed with the words, "Draw for God and thy King, Justice and Truth." In reply General Botha made a simple and statesmanlike speech, in which he recognised the part the British navy had played in the campaign, and pointed out that the army, of which the Union of South Africa ought to be proud, was drawn from all the four provinces, and also from Rhodesia. "I love my country," he said; and this was, perhaps, the most significant statement in the whole speech. It was almost inevitable to contrast the behaviour of men like De Wet and Kemp—sentenced two days after Botha's return to Cape Town—with that of this truly great man, who had kept his word and done his duty for the love of his country.

The terms of surrender showed Botha not only as a general, but as a far-sighted statesman. Officers were allowed to retain their arms on giving their parole, and were allowed to reside where they wished, except for some special reason. The rank and file of the active service were to be interned, but were allowed to retain their arms without ammunition. All reservist troops were to give up arms, and might, on signing the parole, return to their home. The police were to remain at their posts until relieved by Union servants. Civil officials could remain in their homes on signing the parole. All military property otherwise unprovided for was to be handed over. These were fair and honourable terms, and though martial law was proclaimed throughout South-West Africa, the surrender was received in such a broad spirit that little ground was given for resentment.

On his return to Cape Town General Botha hinted at a vista of immensely improved conditions in a "Greater South Africa," and the manner in which he dealt with the conquered colony was certainly such as to conduce to union and development. At a banquet given in his honour he described how they had found in German South-West Africa a map showing the redistribution of the world after the "Peace of Rome, 1916." The whole of Africa south of the equator was allocated to Germany, with a small portion segregated as a Boer reserve. Maritz, he said, had made overtures to the Germans in South-West Africa in 1913; and in the course of correspondence between the Governor and the Kaiser with reference to these overtures, the Kaiser said, "I will not only acknowledge the independence of South Africa, but I will even guarantee it, provided the rebellion is started immediately." "When one hears such guarantees," General Botha continued, "one feels inclined to say, 'Poor Belgium!'"

#### XIV. THE FALL OF WARSAW.

WITH the occupation of Lemberg on 22nd June the Germans had recovered almost the whole of the territory belonging to their ally. They had inflicted a heavy blow upon the Russians, though whether this blow cost them more than it was worth,



from a purely military point of view, is difficult to say. In one way it is clear they did inflict a heavier loss than they sustained. As they advanced they automatically took in their own wounded, and captured a proportion of Russian wounded. That they numbered the latter among their prisoners is almost certain; and it was not wholly unjustified, since normally between 50 and 60 per cent. of the wounded return, sooner or later, to the firing line. Naturally it would be more of the gravely wounded they would take, and therefore fewer of those who would return to the firing line. But although the Germanic armies had produced a decided moral and political effect, and had secured the Hungarian harvest and large supplies of petrol, which are tangible advantages, it can hardly be doubted that they had bought them at too high a price considering their immediate needs. They dared not yet withdraw any significant part of their force to throw against France or Italy. If *all* the loss, or a considerably greater proportion of it, had been upon one side, such a project would have been feasible. But the Russians have a historical reputation for exacting the highest price for the advantages they grant. Even Austerlitz was not the extraordinary victory ill-balanced criticism has heretofore held it; and Borodino was so little a real victory that Kutuzov persisted in regarding it as a Russian victory.

In such circumstances it became a subject for speculation what would be the next German move. Apart from the Carpathian front, the line of contact was not more favourable to the Germans than the line at the beginning of the new offensive. The Germans had not gained any bulwark which they could entrench and fortify to immobilise the Russian armies. Only in Poland was there any sort of equilibrium. The Germans had forced the Russians to evacuate the angle of the Vistula and the San, and in so doing had opened to themselves a way of advance to the north. East of Lemberg the line was similarly fluid, though there were strong defensive lines in this direction. There were suggestions that the Germanic armies would force their way farther and farther east towards Kiev and Odessa, with the object of helping Turkey, who at the moment was suffering from lack of munitions, and had sustained heavy losses in the Dardanelles. But against such a movement there was this to be said. If Germany decided to march east before the Russian armies had been decisively beaten, she might, it is true, divide the southern from the northern armies; but she could only do so at the price of dividing her own force and leaving a flank open to any attack from the north. And in the end she would find herself on the frontier of Rumania. Austria's bid for Rumanian interference was Bessarabia and privileges in Transylvania. But Bessarabia could hardly be compared with Transylvania, which Russia offered, though her price was that Rumania should seize it, while Austria is reported to have offered to conquer Bessarabia. If this were her plan, an eastward march would be logical if not very prudent, and so quixotic an offer does not seem probable. Germany may have wished to bring moral pressure to bear upon Rumania; but she could much more easily reach the frontier of Rumania than that. Indeed, her ally's army was on the frontier already, so that if force were to be applied to Rumania it could be applied at once. The whole operation would have been a gamble even more hazardous than those in which she had already engaged.

There remained the alternative of striking north. Even this project suggested great difficulties, but to the sanguine German imagination it held out a great prize. There is no need to attribute to the German Staff the elaborate plan which was later seen to be in process of evolution. Indeed, it can hardly be doubted that if the

German Staff had the foresight which such a scheme entails, they would have chosen rather to throw their full violence on some point in the West, say, to force through to the Channel coast ; or, at any rate, somewhere where a more immediate military advantage would have been secured. But as they had not achieved a decision over Russia yet, had not broken the line and enveloped the southern section or out-flanked and put to flight the northern section, it is probable that about this time the General Staff began to visualise a vastly greater Sedan. They seem to have grasped at this late hour, after various rushes upon Warsaw and several heavy blows from the north, that the city of so many historical memories could be taken—indeed was most vulnerable—from the south-east. The plan with which the Austrians were to immobilise the Russians at the opening of the war aimed immediately at turning the line of the Vistula from Galicia, and there can be no doubt that it is on this quarter that the formidable defensive line is weakest. A vigorous offensive pressed northwards between the Vistula and the Bug would at a certain point turn the Vistula line. This point was the Ivangorod-Kiev railway, which ran between the Vistula fortress and the Bug through Lublin and Cholm. The railway line was at its nearest point (where it crossed the Bug) but thirty miles from the Galician frontier, and at its farthest hardly twice that distance. If the railway line could be taken, it would be impossible to prevent the investment of Ivangorod, and, of course, the Russian line would already have been lifted so far from the Vistula line. At the moment the Russian line made an enormous salient to the west. Warsaw was about the centre of this salient, and its westernmost point was Plock on the Vistula. It is clear that an offensive from Galicia between the Vistula and the Bug would be a blow at the neck of the salient. If this could be so shrewdly delivered as to make a real advance, another blow might be aimed at the neck of the salient from the north, between Osowiec and Plock. If the Germanic forces could join hands across the neck of the salient, Germany would then at length have what she so much needed—a decision, as unambiguous as possible. She would not only have forced the line of the Vistula and taken Warsaw ; she would have taken or annihilated the armies within the salient. Their communications would have been cut. They would speedily be without the necessities of life.

Such was the rosy vista which, no doubt, about this time began to open alluringly before the eyes of the German Staff.\* Time was of the essence of success in the new German scheme, as it was, of course, of their whole scheme. Unless they could force a speedy success between the Vistula and the Bug, and as speedy an advance across the Narev, the Russians would have time either to reinforce the threatened areas, or, if they chose, to evacuate the Warsaw salient. The advance in Galicia was the most obvious of the German operations during the days immediately following the fall of Lemberg. It was not rapid, and indeed wherever the attempt was made to press forward and hamper the retreat the Germanic armies paid heavily. Heavy rearguard actions took place daily. The Russian lines had withdrawn from Lemberg towards the east, but one section lay at first at Mikolajow, almost due south of Lemberg. To withdraw the section of the line and its extension along the Dniester in safety required bold and skilful handling. Attempts were made to cross the river at Halicz, in the rear of the retreating line ; but the attack was beaten off with heavy loss. Similarly, a blow aimed towards Bobrka, south-east of Lemberg and

\* Ludendorff knew that the time had passed. The Russians had had time to strengthen their Narev positions. But it was Falkenhayn who planned the offensive.





The broken line shows the front after the fall of Lemberg; the continuous line, the position before the evacuation of Warsaw.

towards the right rear of part of the Dniester line, was severely handled. Elsewhere on the Russian front no significant actions took place. There were isolated movements between the rivers Orzyc and Omulew, which flow into the river Narev; but they were not made in force, and had little effect. There was also fighting around Przasnysz. Sandomir, which lies on the Upper Vistula, just south of its junction with the San, was evacuated the day after the fall of Lemberg; but when a battalion of the enemy attempted, slightly farther north, to hurry the Russians in their readjustment of the line, it was annihilated. On the 27th of June the Russians fell back towards the Gnila Lipa, and Halicz was occupied by Linsingen's army.

All these movements were of but subsidiary importance. The impetuous advance across Galicia was succeeded by a lull after the taking of Lemberg. This was probably due to the need for remunitioning and regrouping the armies. But as yet there was no indication of where the next blow would fall. There were isolated attacks at various parts of the line; but with so little to go upon, speculation as to the future German plans became bewildered and weak. It was on the 29th of June that the first movements of a new and formidable offensive began, though at the moment they attracted little attention. On that day the Germans were found to be advancing upon a front whose line of thrust pointed through Belz and Tomaszow. This is a front facing towards the north, the second town being actually in Russian Poland. The Austro-German armies were, therefore, turning north, though how far they intended to press could not at first be guessed.

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About this time, when Russia had already suffered greatly in prestige by two months' retreat from the province she had conquered and in which she had set up an administration, a great reconstruction was taking place in the Russian administration, which was somewhat similar to that which occurred in Great Britain. The Cabinet was changed, and the effect was to make the Government more representative of the people. Russia was aroused, and a strong and thorough reorganisation was felt to be necessary. The War Minister, Sukhomlinov, retired, and General Polivanov succeeded him; M. Gouchkov, the leader of the Octobrists, was appointed Minister of Munitions; and the Tsar summoned the whole Empire to prepare for a victorious offensive.

The struggle was now to become more critical. The Germans had determined to aim at a greater Sedan in the Warsaw salient, and as the overwhelming majority of the troops used would be German, acting under tried German leaders, the Kaiser looked confidently towards the future. The preceding two months had been but a prelude; the main stroke was about to be delivered.

By 1st July it became quite clear that the northward movement was assuming formidable proportions, and was, indeed, the chief centre of interest and danger. The attacking force was seen to be composed of two army groups deployed across the whole distance between the Vistula and the Bug. The western group, chiefly Austrian, was under the command of the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, who had commanded an army in this very region at the beginning of the war. The eastern group, composed chiefly of Germans, was commanded by Mackensen, who had been in charge of the main attack in Galicia. The Archduke had crossed the Tanev into Poland, and was striking due north. Mackensen, articulating his army with that on his left, was also facing north; and the advancing lines were nearing the fortress of Zamosc, some twenty-five miles over the frontier. The attacks due eastward



were kept up at the same time, but there could be little doubt that their end was to distract attention from the main thrust towards the Ivangorod-Kiev railway. The line of advance was about one hundred miles long, and the enemy forces engaged were heavy; but from the nature of the ground, the heavy artillery could neither move so quickly nor be served so efficiently as when moving along the fine railway system of Galicia. North of the Austro-Russian frontier the country is vastly different from that to the south. In this area there is not a single railway north of the Austrian railheads and south of the railway between Ivangorod and Cholm. The railway on this sector is about eighty miles long, and there are only five roads which lead to it. Farther south there are few roads. Two of them centre in Zamosc, two in Cholm, two in Lublin. The country, further, is cut across by river courses; there is much marshland, the surface is broken by many small eminences, and there are numerous forests.

Transport in such country laboured under a great handicap, and the enemy made way but slowly. By 1st July Zamosc had been taken. The following day the armies were pressing north of the fortress. At the same time Woyrsch's army on the left of the Vistula, which had been pressing unsuccessfully for some time to cross, was now allowed to approach the river at Josefov. It is clear that, with every mile of advance of the Austro-German armies, more of the Vistula line was uncovered as the Russian forces retreated northward. On 3rd July the advancing line was defined by Josefov-Krasnik-Turobin-Zamosc.

Mackensen's advance was a more difficult undertaking, since he was ever marching away from the troops supporting his flank, and the readjustments could neither be very rapid nor easy. It was in order to relieve him that the operations were pressed at the same time in Eastern Galicia. When, on 3rd July, the Austrians and Germans were half-way to the railway which was their goal, the armies in Galicia had forced the line of the Gnila Lipa, and the Russians were falling back towards the Zlota Lipa. At the same time there was movement on the Narev front. The fighting about Krasnik was of the utmost stubbornness now that conditions were somewhat equalised, though a German report about this time stated that during May and June the Austro-Germans had captured 940 machine guns and 344 guns. Such a loss would be difficult to make good. But the reconstituted 3rd Army, now under General Lesch, made a determined stand, and brought the advance to a complete standstill for several days. In Poland Evert's troops took the deliberate offensive at Radom, and captured several lines of trenches.

**Krasnik.**—The Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, determined to advance, threw his army forward with great violence. The Russians had taken up strong positions to the south of Lublin. The Archduke directed his advance up the Krasnik-Lublin road. His army may have amounted to about 400,000 men. The Russians took up their stand across the road from Urzedov to Bychawa. In front of their right lay the brook Urzedovka. The Austrians lay between the brook and the Wyznica. On the three days, 5th to 7th, the fighting worked up to the fiercest intensity. On the 5th General Evert began to co-operate with Lesch. His troops crossed the brook, and fell upon the Austrians' weak left flank with great violence. At the same time, on the east of the road, Lesch's army advanced up the valley of the Bistritza. On the first day of the battle some 2,000 Austrian dead lay in front of the Russian lines, and 2,000 prisoners were taken. The same number of prisoners fell into Russian hands on the second day, and on the third the Russian victory was complete.

The battle had left several dozen machine guns and 11,000 prisoners in Russian hands, at the spot, oddly enough, where the same commander had been decisively beaten in September 1914. Over the forty-mile front occupied by the Archduke the retreat was general for a space of about two miles; and by 12th July the number of prisoners had increased to 22,000. He came to a halt on positions just north of the Wyznica across to the high ground, which lies in the triangle below the village of Bystrica, which lies on the river of the same name. The river splits into two streams and runs south, skirting a small eminence called in the official *communiqués* Hill 118. Here the Austrians maintained their footing, re-formed, and prepared to advance once more. Mackensen, meanwhile, was held up about midway between Zamosc and Krasnostav, on the road to Cholm. His line, like that of the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, lay across the main road of advance to his goal. Mackensen was aiming at Cholm as the Archduke looked to Lublin, the two main towns on the railway. A few days later the Austro-Germans were able to advance once more, and the Russians took up again the positions on which they had given battle before.

**The Battle of the Narev.**—It was at this time that "great enemy forces" were found to be advancing on another front. This time the blow was struck by General von Gallwitz from the north of Warsaw. The river Narev, which enters the Bug north of Warsaw, was the northern bulwark of the advanced Russian line. It continued the Vistula defensive line with the Bobr to the Niemen front. At the confluence of the Bug and the Vistula stood the great Polish fortress of Novo Georgievsk, and the Narev was considered of so much importance that its course was marked by several smaller fortresses. Sierok, Pultusk, Rozan, Ostrolenka, Lomza, are the fortresses in the order in which they run from the Bug. The Narev guarded the northern flank of Warsaw. It had been known that the Germans were concentrating at Thorn for a new blow; but the position and force of the blow came as a surprise. Indeed at the time there seemed to be no realisation of what the blow meant. It was thought that it might be a late attempt to guard the communications of the armies operating to the north in Courland. But there can be little doubt it was a deliberate attempt to capture the forces in the Warsaw salient, and it was linked up directly with the blow across the neck of the salient from the south. A few days previously there had been a vigorous assault upon the positions west of Warsaw. By means of poisonous gases an attempt had been made to force the line, but without success.

The Narev front faces the south-east of East Prussia. The river itself has many tributaries from the Prussian side, and it was down the valleys of these tributaries that the new offensive was urged. There was a violent artillery attack towards Lomza. On the sector about the stream Pissa, which included this fortress, the attack succeeded at first in carrying the Russian first line of trenches; but the Germans were thrown back by a counter-attack. There was a stubborn engagement about the Szkwa, the next tributary towards the west. But the chief force was thrown nearer to the Vistula, between the Orzyc and the Lydnia. Between these two rivers lies the town Przasnysz, which had already changed hands several times during the war. It was an exposed town, and after its latest recovery it had been fortified by the Russians as an advanced post beyond the Narev. The reason that the offensive was urged with most violence in this district was that the only railway in the whole area roughly follows the course of the Lydnia; and the highroad which runs from East Prussia through Mława runs through Przasnysz. The com-



munications were, therefore, more suitable here than elsewhere, and such was the strength of the enemy force that on 13th July the Russians in this section of the front retired to their second line. A day later Przasnysz fell into the hands of the Germans. The attack was pressed with great vigour, and at the same time the Niemen Army, under Otto von Below, began to advance towards Riga. Four days after the fall of Przasnysz Litvinov's 1st Army had fallen back to the Narev and over it. The district was well defended naturally by numerous marshes, but the Germans pressed on, and were soon besieging the western works of Ostrolenka.

**Krasnostav.**—Meanwhile the Germanic forces between the Vistula and the Bug had not been idle, though they had not been able to make much headway. But on the same day (18th) that the Russians fell back over the Narev, Mackensen took Krasnostav. This small town is only about ten miles from the Ivangorod-Kiev railway as the crow flies, though it is, perhaps, two or three miles farther by the road to the west of which it stands. The day after Przasnysz fell movement commenced over the whole line in this section of the front. The Archduke attacked again and again with a violence out of all proportion to his success. The Guard, Caucasian, and Siberian troops of Lesch's army were more than a match for the Austrians. Mackensen was more successful. He initiated his movement by a feint towards the west of Krasnostav, towards the village of Pilaskowice. On his right flank, too, at the same time there was a determined effort to break the lines of the brook Wolica. His blow in this direction was aimed at the junction of the 3rd Army with the newly-formed 13th Army, which lay between Sokal and Cholm. Then, when both flanks were heavily engaged, he attacked in full force along the main road towards Krasnostav, where the 3rd Caucasians stood. In this operation the heavy artillery, of necessity tied to the neighbourhood of the road, was thrown into the scale. By Sunday, 18th, the advance had gained a signal success, and Mackensen's section of the enemy line now lay on an average twelve miles from the railway. Mackensen had been held up twelve days. The reason of the final advance was the cogent argument of the heavy guns. The Caucasians' skilful defences were swept away, and the Prussian Guard marched up the highroad in column of fours. There were no defenders left, and for the moment the way to Cholm lay open. But the long check when time meant so much, and the sudden advance when the artillery had come up and been ranged, give the true atmosphere of the present phase of the struggle.

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With the advance on the Narev, the Russians withdrew from their positions on the Bzura and Ravka, and readjusted their whole line in Poland. Alexeieff, who was in charge of the main Russian front, automatically took control of each army as it moved out of Galicia. Immediately in front of Warsaw the Blonie and Grojec position, which had been fortified for months, and was supposed to be of greater strength than the advanced positions on the Bzura, had been occupied. The new line was at its nearest about eighteen miles from the city and even less from the Vistula, and with the withdrawal on this section of the front the threat to the Polish salient became clearer. A line drawn from about Osowiec to Krasnostav is about 180 miles long, and on this base the Polish line made a rough semicircle. The movement was most threatening at the ends of the base line. If Gallwitz could break through across the Narev and cut the Warsaw-Petrograd railway, which the river defended, he would obviously be able at least to hamper the orderly evacuation of

the Warsaw salient. Yet the Narev line was very strong. Taking the Warsaw-Petrograd railway as a chord, the river arc was well supplied with subsidiary railway lines. Three lines converged on Ostrolenka. The Lyck-Bialystok line crossed the river at Osowiec, and the main road from Pultusk to Petrograd ran through Rozan, Ostrolenka, and Lomza, giving a ready means of distributing troops and munitions arriving at Ostrolenka over the threatened area.

By 23rd July the Germans had succeeded in crossing the Narev south of Ostrolenka, and at several points as far as Pultusk. But they kept an insecure footing on the southern bank of the river only with the greatest difficulty. At various points they were thrown back by fierce counter-attacks. Three days later they had forced their way across the river north of Ostrolenka. But even this was of little value. Unless the various points at which they had crossed could be linked up, the German forces could be no serious menace to the Russians. The Russians, in fact, did not as yet see the necessity of falling back from the river, and on 27th July, by a vigorous counter-offensive, threw the enemy back to the northern side of the river.

While the struggle was going on with restless energy here, and Mackensen's offensive between the Vistula and the Bug was slowly zigzagging forward under the impetus of attack and counter-attack, there were significant movements elsewhere on the Russian front. In Courland, the district between the Niemen and the coast line, Below was pressing his advance with a considerable force of cavalry. He had seized Libau, on the coast, and on 20th July he occupied Windau, farther north. Each of these ports was necessary in its way for the complete clearing of the province, preparatory to the march on Riga. Farther south the Germans were pressing the Russian lines back to the Vistula. On the day that Windau was taken, Radom also fell into the hands of the enemy. Three days later they had forced back the line above Ivangorod to the Vistula, and had thrown a small force across the river. The Austrians were aiming here at the investment of the fortress and at the isolation of Warsaw.

The struggle still persisted between the Vistula and the Bug. On 28th July the Russians made a successful counter-attack between the Wieprz and the Bug; but it was probably only to safeguard their withdrawal, for on the last day of the month the line of the railway was evacuated. The Austrians entered Lublin, but it was too late to have any serious effect upon the fortunes of the force within the Warsaw salient. Two days later the Germans in Courland pressed due eastward and took Mitau. Along the whole course of the river Aa, which runs into the Gulf of Riga, west of Riga, Below's force was pressing due eastward, but without achieving any serious success. The only point in this movement was to sweep forward and turn the line of the Niemen, on which the Russians were supposed to be about to make a serious stand. The important fortress Kovno stood at the bend of the Niemen, and its capture would have been less necessary if the Germans could have pushed their march sufficiently far towards the east to invest it. They had pressed eastward as far as Ponievitz, on the Shavli-Dvinsk railway, but there they were held. Although they had crossed the Vistula between Warsaw and Ivangorod, and although they had cut the railway line between Ivangorod and Kiev, they could not make the rapid advance necessary in order to harry and hamper the orderly retreat of the Russians.

The movement in Courland advanced farther the next day, and it had pressed so far that it had become a little hazardous unless Riga could be taken and the



gulf cleared. While Kovno held and Riga had not fallen, the line made a pronounced salient towards Dvinsk. Farther south only on this day could the Germans capture the crossing at Ostrolenka. But at Lomza, slightly to the north, the Russians still contrived to resist. Immediately before Warsaw the Russians had now been compelled to evacuate the Blonie position and fall back within the outer works of the fortress. Prince Leopold of Bavaria, who had succeeded to the command of the 9th Army when Mackensen went to the 11th, in Galicia, began to emerge from the obscurity which had hidden his name before, and to take his place as the conqueror of Warsaw. Woyrsch's army, below Warsaw, had already crossed the Vistula at several points, but found it impossible to extend the grip upon the right bank. They strove with the utmost energy to penetrate the forests in order to take the Warsaw armies on the left and the Lublin armies on the right flank. On 2nd August, however, they were able to bring up two additional corps and throw them across the Vistula, about the mouth of the Pilitza. The advance in this direction had been held before only by extending the line of the 2nd Army. But against the four German and Austrian Corps now across no further troops were available, and a corps with a few detachments could not check the advance of four corps for more than a few hours. From the moment that these new German corps crossed the Vistula the last hope for the retention of Warsaw died, and its evacuation became imminent.

So matters stood upon the night of Wednesday, 3rd August. The massed field artillery was trained on the Warsaw fortifications. The Germans, time after time, fought their way to the barbed wire entanglements, only to be hurled back by the rearguard of the 6th Corps. The city shook with the thunder of the guns. German aeroplanes darted hither and thither in spite of the attentions of the Russian guns. The night sky was lit up by the flashes of bursting shells. Shortly after midnight several of the defensive works fell, and the Russian troops withdrew within the city. At about three o'clock the bridges were blown up, and three hours later the German cavalry of Prince Leopold's army entered the city. Warsaw is the third city of the Russian Empire, a city of some 900,000 inhabitants. It was the centre of a thriving manufacturing district. The city lies on the left bank of the river, and is connected by bridges with the suburb Praga, on the right bank. It is an historic town, with a varied story since the sixteenth century, when it became a Polish city.

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A thrilling account of the evacuation of the ancient city was cabled to the *Chicago Daily News* by its correspondent with the Russian army, Mr. Bassett Rigby. The Russian authorities announced their intention to evacuate the city on the day when the seriousness of the new German threat from the north became evident. This was 13th July, when Przasnysz fell into German hands. It was announced in Warsaw that the official evacuation of the city would begin on Sunday, 18th July; but it began at once. As at Antwerp, the evacuation was accompanied by the simultaneous drainage into it of the refugees from the neighbouring country. Houses were visited by the police, and the people were advised to leave the city for the interior of Russia; and people of all grades of society got together what portable valuables they could and left. Peasants, weary, dispirited, and impoverished, trooped into the city carrying their small store of goods, only to find that safety pointed them yet farther on. The Allied consuls left with their archives for Moscow. The train journey occupied three days, since the main lines were congested with

military traffic ; and many who fled before the German approach were glad to avail themselves of cattle trucks.

At the same time the stripping of the city was methodically carried out. What could not be taken was destroyed if it would be of any service to the Germans. Machinery of all sorts went east by free transport. Even linotype machines were dismantled and carried off in the general stream. The railway lines were worked day and night. Thousands of cars were in use to carry off any valuables that could be removed. Police and soldiers searched all printing factories for metal fittings. Day and night they worked with feverish energy, especially to take down and send away all copper fittings. Telegraph wires, the bronze church bells, church vestments and sacred vessels, the valuable ikons and relics, all were packed up and dispatched. While the churches were being stripped of all their valuables, weeping multitudes herded together inside. Services were frequently held, but a common impulse made the churches a centre of refuge.

Banks, post offices, law courts, sent their treasure away, municipal offices and churches their archives. Bridges were carefully mined. Numerous land mines, too, were laid about the city. Soldiers who could be spared from this stripping of the city were detailed to scrape the face of the countryside bare. Crops were gathered where possible ; where not they were burned. Villages were erased. The whole area from immediately behind the fighting line to Brest was covered with an army of destruction as busy and numerous as ants. Even scraps of dynamited metal were removed east. The streets were crowded with carts, the bridges with trains, the river with boats. All had within them, no matter in what guise, romances with a poignancy no story could excel. The work bore the character of a vast corporate sacrificial act. No object was too costly or too precious to escape destruction if it could not be taken away, and would be of value to the invader if left. Meanwhile the enemy went on dealing his stupendous blows north, south, and west, in the attempt to destroy the armies which stolidly fended him off until the work should be accomplished.

Food went up to almost famine prices. The public water supply vanished with the removal of the pumping machinery. Paper money depreciated to an enormous extent. For nearly a fortnight before the Germans entered the city there had been hardly a horse or a carriage west of the river. Numbers of carriages were loaded up and driven out on the great adventure into Russia. Martial law had to be introduced through the closing of the civil courts. Long tracks of struggling, suffering humanity, like the savage weals of a whip, marked where the fear of the invader had driven men to essay the task of walking to safety. Here were women with children at the breast, small boys and girls following the cart which carried their old parents and all that they possessed. Here lay the debris of traffic, wheels fallen adrift, carts with the springs broken, and all the refuse that haste and poverty in panic can provide. A Polish Committee took over the administration of the city towards the last. Thousands of influential Poles had left, as it had been rumoured that pro-German Poles had prepared lists of their fellow-countrymen who leaned most to Russia. Towards the end life in the city seemed to become like a hideous dream. All around was the glare of burning villages ; overhead the Taubes flew, all the time dropping bombs and observing the exodus—all the time the thunder of guns.

Yet, though it is true that the agony of Poland was gathered up and concentrated in the evacuation of Warsaw, of itself the evacuation was of little military



value. Morally, no doubt, it had a value. It heartened the Germanic soldiers and the peoples of the Central Empires. This was a considerable asset. Of the many things upon which a soldier is said to fight the most important, the confidence and spirit of the people, is frequently omitted. The success was also of considerable political value. The effect it might have upon wavering neutrals was estimated highly. As a matter of fact, it did not have all the effect, nor, indeed, even a great part of that, which it was reckoned to achieve. Militarily, however, its value was not considerable. The Vistula line was, as an obstacle, of considerable military importance; and so far as the abandonment of Warsaw meant also the abandonment of the Vistula line, this was a considerable military achievement. But Warsaw itself really meant the railways that centred in it. Six great railways ran into it—three from Russia, connecting it with Petrograd, Moscow, and Kiev. And numerous relief lines drained the excessive traffic so that there need not be too great a congestion. The abandonment of Warsaw meant that the advanced lines with their many arteries must be replaced by second lines with less highly organised communications.

The army which entered Warsaw on the morning of the 5th of August found an empty city, and when Ivangorod was evacuated the following day, there was again no booty. Everything had been removed. The evacuation of Warsaw and of the Vistula line was, in fact, a strategic victory for the Russians. When an army is vitally weaker than its enemy it is the highest prudence to avoid giving battle. This was the position of the Russian army. A fair proportion of its troops were insufficiently armed; many were not armed at all, except by clubs. The army, as a whole, had no heavy guns to compete with and subdue those of the Germans. Yet in all these complex movements, which went to make the sum total of the evacuation of Warsaw, there was no sign of panic in the armies, no sign even of haste. The Grand Duke left at his own time and in his own way. All that he left for the invader in Warsaw was the ancient library of some 750,000 volumes—a graceful recognition of the culture of the enemy. There can hardly be a doubt that this orderly evacuation of a dangerous salient under the vigorous, skilful, and continuous pressure of such an enemy as Germany, will rank as one of the great achievements of military history. The pressure was kept up all over the line. What must have been the difficulty of lifting back the line from Ivangorod under the sledge-hammer blows from the south-east, and the violent attacks of Woyrsch's army north and west, we can only guess. But everything impels us to recognise the splendid fighting value of the Tsar's troops. No troops in the world have ever shown the remarkable stolidity and spirit of these Russian rank and file. Whether armed or unarmed, they stood their ground until ordered to fall back. What superbly cool leadership these operations demanded! What extraordinary correlation of the different forces! For it must be realised that all these days the Germans, who outnumbered the Russians and were incomparably better armed, were doing all they could to throw the armies into confusion. A false step anywhere, any giving way in the long line which acted as a bulwark to Warsaw, and the Germans might have forced their way into the position on the rear of the Warsaw armies.

And the price of all this? It cannot be too often repeated that Germany required to gain a military decision—that is to say, she must so deal with a considerable proportion of the Russian army that it lost order and cohesion, like the French at Waterloo. Unless she could do that, the Russian army, however far it might

retreat, would be a living menace. So far Germany's position as the conqueror of Warsaw was a misrepresentation of the facts. It looked much more imposing than it was. Her position was correctly given only by a balance-sheet. She had inflicted heavy loss upon the Russians, but at what a cost to herself! Certainly, a simple logical deduction showed that her loss had been so great that she could not keep pace with it. For the numbers on the Russian front, according to reputable estimates, had dwindled considerably, and it was clear that if she had any further numbers she would throw them into the line and press home the decision which was so necessary. If she did not throw in fresh numbers, then there can only have been one reason for it. About this time there appeared a careful estimate of the resources of the Central Powers. It was estimated that Germany had altogether 3,200,000 men actually in the fighting line, and it was suggested that there was reason to suppose she could not keep more men in the field. The fact, at any rate, one gathers was widely appreciated—that Germany could not put more men in the field. The explanation was not so clear, but it seems less reasonable to think Germany could not cope with the problem of equipment than that she was naturally checked by the problem of wastage of numbers. She had repeatedly announced the capture of large numbers of rifles, guns, and machine guns. These must have swelled her store; and although Turkey may have been a strain upon her resources, it is difficult to believe that Germany began the war without vast reserves of fighting material, and that she could not increase her output to an enormous extent.

At any rate, the capture of Warsaw did not avail her. The rumours of peace projects which were at once set afoot showed that she realised how small a success it was, and we find her at once hot-speed again in pursuit of that will-o'-the-wisp—a decision.

## XV. THE RETREAT TO THE BUG.

THERE is a report that the Kaiser summed up his disappointment at failing to secure a decision in words which, at any rate, ring true. "There will be no decorations," he said, "for anybody on this occasion. We have paid too dearly for Warsaw. We have captured only the cage; the bird has flown. So long as the Russian army is free, the problem of the campaign remains unsolved."

The entry into Warsaw was a hollow victory, as was realised by the German Staff, who had striven to capture at least one of the Russian armies by entering the historic city as conquerors in a terrible struggle. There had been sufficient struggle, it is true, but Warsaw was not stormed. It was evacuated in an orderly manner by the Russians, and occupied by the Germans when the Grand Duke had fully arranged for the retreat of his armies in the salient. Cheated of their spectacular effect, the Germans began to dream of Brest Litovski, the great Bug fortress, in which it was hoped the Russians would leave a heavy garrison. Historically and strategically it was thought the Russian generals would be unable to resist the attraction of the fortress. Then the huge siege train would be brought up, and the fortress, battered from all sides, would be compelled to yield with the army which had been penned up in it. The dream had this much of truth in it, that if an army had been left in any fortress it would almost certainly have shared the fate of Przemyśl.

So, unweariedly, the Germans pressed on. Prince Leopold performed some of



those grandiose actions without which the German army would cease to exist. He decorated several officers in the square at Warsaw. But even this pause was no delay. While he dallied behind inflicting German glory upon the Poles who still remained in Warsaw, his vanguard was endeavouring to force the river crossing in order to follow the Russians. Novo Georgievsk had been left with a garrison to facilitate still further the ease of the Russian movements. This was the one remaining outpost of the Vistula line. The Narev line still held, and the Niemen fortresses were yet intact, and upon them depended the ability of the Russians to hold their next line of defence. The Niemen-Bug defensive line was, indeed, the chief Russian defensive line, and the General Staff was, at the outset of the war, in two minds as to concentrating upon it and leaving Warsaw to its fate.

The attack upon this line opened by an attempt from the extreme north. The Russian line, after the fall of Warsaw, was clearly instable. The centre still created a great salient towards the west, and the German Staff knew that a further retirement would be necessary. It was their immediate purpose so to hamper this retreat that the Russian communications would become congested, and the armies, strung out on lines over 1,000 miles in extent, would fall into confusion, and so prepare the way for that great *coup* which would put Russia out of the fight. The safety of the Russian armies of the centre depended upon the security of the flanks, and one of these, the northern, could be turned. If a German force could be landed above Riga, the positions on the Dvina could not be maintained, and the whole of the Russian line would be turned.

Admiral Kannin, who commanded the Baltic fleet, foresaw the danger. There had been engagements with detachments of the German fleet off the Courland coast in the latter part of June and the beginning of July. These actions suggested the possibility of an attempt to land on the shores of the Gulf of Riga, and the Russian Admiral made his preparations. For the German plan to be successful an entrance to the Gulf of Riga must be gained, and the Russian fleet must either be decisively beaten or contained so that the force landed could be supplied for at least long enough to enable it to effect a junction with the German army at Riga.

At the beginning of August it was discovered that the Germans proposed to attempt some stroke from the sea, for a British submarine on 2nd August caught and sank a transport in the Baltic. Six days later a considerable German squadron attempted to force the entrance to the gulf. About nine battleships of an older type, with twelve cruisers and a flotilla of destroyers, attempted to force the main channel between the island of Oesel and the mainland, but was beaten off. A further indecisive engagement followed on the 12th, and then on the 16th a heavy engagement was fought. By the 18th two German cruisers \* had been either destroyed or put out of action, and eight destroyers were lost. The Russians fought skilfully, and the gunboat *Sivutsh* went down in flames, firing to the last. The next day the German fleet entered the gulf in a fog, but the force which it attempted to land in flat barges at Pernau, on the road to Petrograd, was caught and either destroyed or captured. Its object having failed and the Russian fleet being still in full strength, the German squadron evacuated the gulf two days later. The attempt to turn the line from the extreme north had failed, but by this time the main Russian line had been pierced by frontal assault, and the more ambitious but precarious adventure from the sea was abandoned.

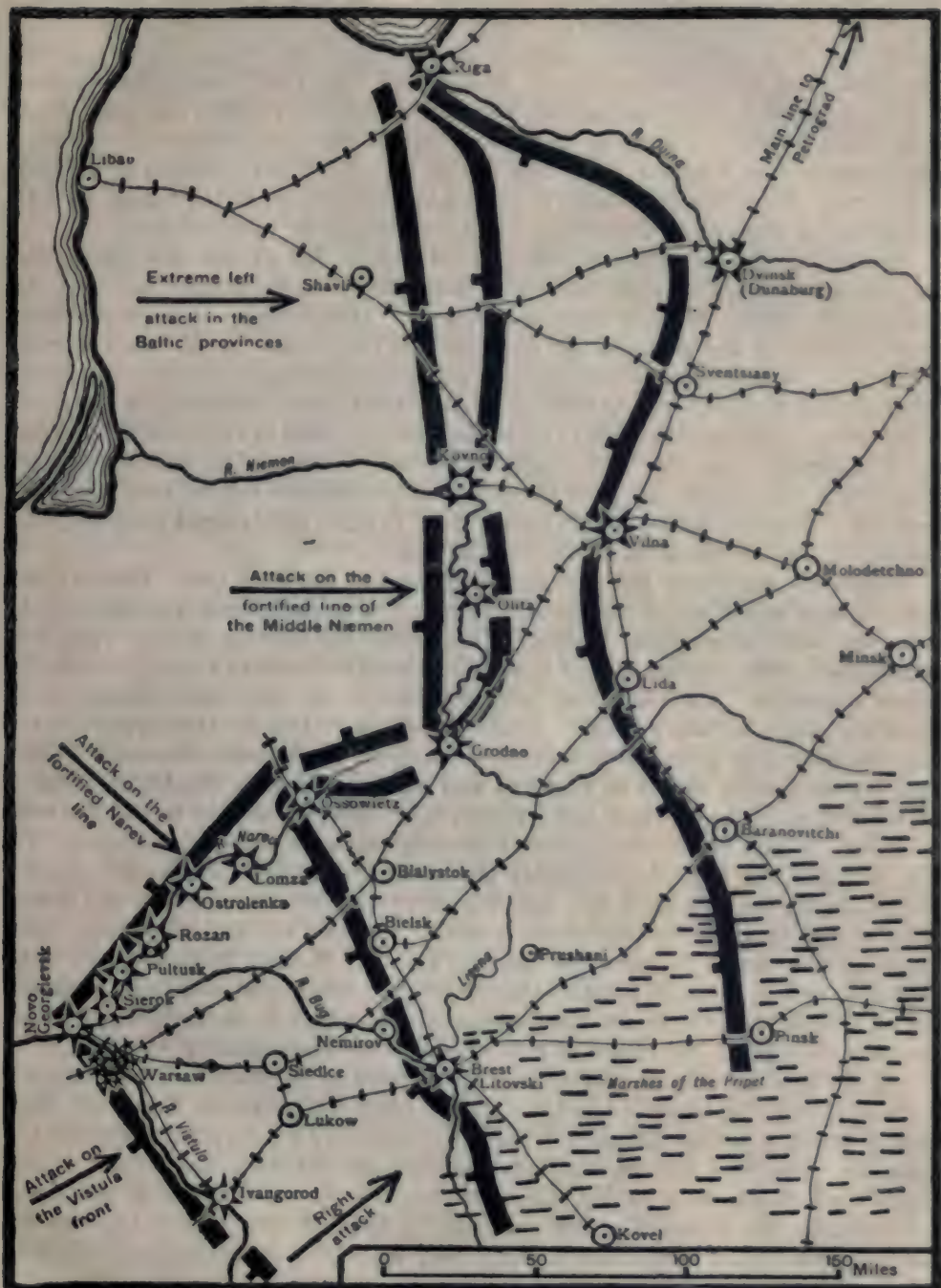
\* One was the *Moltke*.

The Niemen-Bug line was one of great strength. Kovno, Olita, and Grodno defended the actual river line, and Osowiec guarded the nose of the salient which jutted westward from Grodno. Each of these fortresses was sufficient to exact a fairly heavy price from the enemy who would take it. But the line did not really depend upon them. Natural defensive lines such as this river line are only as strong as their flanks. If these do not rest upon impregnable positions, they are at the mercy of a turning movement. The Vistula line, for instance, fell in Galicia. As soon as Mackensen had forced his way to Jaroslav the Vistula line must be rolled up. The Niemen-Bug line had a similar weakness. Like the Vistula line, its flanks did not cover the whole of the territory it was meant to defend. North of the Niemen there lay the province of Courland, which was open to an enemy offensive. In this area, at the moment when Warsaw fell, there was evidence of German operations of some magnitude. Below, with a large force of cavalry, was driving across the district between Riga and the Niemen. This was cogent proof that the Germans had no idea of resting upon the Vistula line, at any rate immediately. There were other proofs of this. Mackensen's force would have had to fall back if the Germans had intended to hold the Vistula. But the presence of Below's troops meant still more. It was a clear indication that the Germans meant still to try for a decision. They could not hamper the retreat from Warsaw by these operations, but they could turn the line of the Niemen, and, if successful, might even envelop part of the Russian force engaged there.

The centre of gravity of the struggle was, however, farther south, towards Brest. Here were engaged three groups of armies—the Germans from the Narev, Prince Leopold's Warsaw group, and Mackensen's army from the south. Their lines of advance converged upon Brest. Prince Leopold's group faced due east. Even on this line the Russian retreat was made at its own time, and when this is realised it can be appreciated how wild were the stories in certain British newspapers that the Russians were defeated. With Mackensen striking at the left flank and rear of Brest, and Scholtz and Gallwitz hurling themselves against the Narev line, the position of armies, thus threatened on both flanks, might have seemed desperate. The retreat, however, was made with the utmost deliberation, so that three days after the evacuation of Warsaw the river line below the city was only crossed after a fierce contest, and the western suburb of Warsaw, Praga, was not occupied until the 9th. The chief factor in holding up the German advance past the Vistula was the magnificent defence of the line of the Narev. This line had, as we have seen, natural defensive features of great strength, and these had been improved by the erection of fortresses and railways to concentrate force at any threatened points.

The Narev armies were clearly a more immediate threat to the retreat of the Russians than Mackensen's armies, and more force was concentrated against their advance. Everything clearly depended upon the speed with which the Germans could burst through on the north. Yet it was not until the 16th that they were able to announce that they had broken the Narev front. The Russian achievement was extraordinary. With a thin fringe of rearguards the Russians held the German Narev armies. The battles on this river front were contested with the utmost fury, and the German advance was made only at the greatest expense. On the direct line to Brest, Siedlce, the former headquarters of Alexeieff, was occupied, and farther south Lukow also, before the Narev armies were allowed to have their way. But the mad rush inspired by the idea of wiping out the Kaiser's displeasure suffered





Map showing the Strategy and Stages of the German-Austrian Advance.

from the folly that had brought it into being. The German cavalry were driven ahead with no rations, and expected to pick up their food. Apart from the fact that this boded little good for any people who had been left behind, it was an ill-conceived plan, for the Germans must have known that the Russians were systematically destroying everything as they retreated. So these German horsemen made their first acquaintance with the land across the Vistula in a half-starved condition. The infantry who followed were little better off. They were so hurried forward that a great proportion were unfit to remain in the ranks when they came up with the retreating Russians. Numbers gave themselves up for food and rest.

Meanwhile, the left flank of the Warsaw armies had caught Mackensen, and inflicted a serious check upon him in an engagement which dragged on over the critical days before Warsaw until 9th August. The Austrian right was resting upon the Wieprz, and it was in this direction that help came; for Woyrsch reached the flank of his colleague's army as he advanced past Ivangorod, and the opportune reinforcement was sufficient to turn the scale. Mackensen's right on the Bug fared much worse. He had been able to make only twenty miles in twelve days—a striking commentary upon how little the Russians were beaten. The splendid struggle of Alexeieff, who was in charge of the armies of the Warsaw salient, combined with the loyal and skilful support of his former chief, Ivanov, had brought to nothing the Kaiser's dream of cutting off the Russian armies.

Meanwhile the Narev line had only been won at immense cost. Gallwitz and Scholtz, who were here in command, had many advantages over Mackensen. At their rear were several lines of good railway from the German bases. Food and ammunition were supplied to the lines with clocklike regularity and precision by steam tramways. The roads had been attended to so that their surface would stand the strain of heavy traffic. Concrete beds were laid for the support of the huge Austrian siege guns which were to batter down the Russian fortresses. Thus, with his mechanical means all prepared and with fresh troops, Hindenburg looked for the success he had, in fact, never gained apart from the terrain he knew so well.

It was his aim to articulate the northern advance with that of Mackensen. He had, as usual, the help of spies highly placed in the Russian Staff, though Alexeieff was gradually weeding them out, and their advantage was being materially diminished by the necessity for improvisation which fell upon all the high Russian command at this time. To carry the German plan the Russian fortresses had to be captured, and as Alexeieff handled the situation so subtly and made such excellent use of his troops, the Germans were exasperated by the sight of the Russian armies escaping their grip. By means of gas, by means of heavy artillery, they sought to break the Russian defence. When nothing seemed to be yielding Hindenburg remembered only the Kaiser's reproach, and, to carry the fortresses, flung rank upon rank of infantry against the forts. They were cut down by the guns. Attempts to cross the river were met by concentrated shrapnel fire from the wooded banks, where the Russians were hidden in good cover. Sierok, which had been taken, was recovered by the Russians at the point of the bayonet after one of the hopeless German attacks had broken down, and it only fell finally on 7th August. Even in Courland the Germans were checked.

**Kovno.**—The first attack upon the fortresses failed, and on the 8th Hindenburg set himself to carry Kovno at all costs. There were numerous reasons why Kovno should have been specially chosen. It was first, and most obviously the main



protection of Courland. Moreover, standing on the railway from East Prussia to Vilna, it was an outpost of that town and an important junction. Further, and most important, it was by this time the best if not the only place to break through and strike down behind the Russian armies. Gallwitz, across the Narev, was held by the Russians retiring from the salient. If Kovno fell, Grodno would be isolated; and it was more strongly covered naturally than Kovno, for every advantage had been taken of the natural cover of swamp and woodland.

Kovno was a first-class fortress. Standing upon the Niemen where the Vilia enters it, it was defended by a girdle of eleven forts. Opposite the Vilia mouth, a tiny stream, the Jessia, enters the Niemen, and hence the forts were divided into four sectors. Five lay west of the Jessia-Vilia line, and five east, one guarding the Vilna bridge; but seven were to the south of the Niemen. The attack upon the fortress covered a period of twelve days, during which it was subjected to the fire of the heaviest artillery, including a number of 16.5 guns. With such a siege train the Germans could have taken the fortress at their leisure at very little cost. But leisure seemed to have passed from the German counsels, and Litzmann, who commanded under Eichhorn, was bitten with the demon of haste. He drove his infantry forward without first reducing the guns, and the ground was swept by the Russian artillery, which had reserved its fire. The approaches had, indeed, been prepared with the utmost care. Wire entanglements, entrenchments, and land mines formed a most formidable defence.

The heavy guns battered away at the fortress all day and night, and the weary and faltering infantry, driven back again and again by the murderous fire from wooded cover, were drummed on once more by martial music. The sector of the defences which lies between the Niemen and the Jessia was selected for the first and heaviest attack, and one of the four forts was kept under continuous fire for several days. Huge howitzers threw an incessant stream of heavy shell upon it, until at length it was reduced, and the Germans burst through the breach it made in the line, and into the spaces between the other forts of this sector. Berlin made merry over the fall of the works on this sector, as though the whole position had been won. But, in fact, it was the story of Liège over again. The cost of these incessant massed attacks was enormous, and Litzmann's troops were broken upon the fortress before they gained even this success. There was a lull in the attack for a few days, and this was due not only to the preparations for the final attack, but still more to the need of gaining reinforcements so that the position could be won. Meanwhile the heavy guns kept up their murderous storm, and on the 16th the massed tactics began once more. Only German impatience presented the Russians with this chance to equalise the loss. If the Germans had been content to wait, they could easily have avoided at least fifty per cent. of the loss due to their battering tactics.

The method was to isolate a fort and turn on to it about half of the guns, great and small, until it was literally rased to the ground. No forts have yet been designed which can bear that sort of treatment for long. The means by which the French had been able to keep the Germans out of Verdun—the wide-cast cincture of earthworks, deeply and thoroughly entrenched, well found and well munitioned—were impossible here, because the Russians were short of munitions and heavy guns. To add to the terror of those days aeroplanes and airships were sent over Kovno to correct the fire and also to drop bombs. Litzmann virtually presented the Russians with the one hundred thousand lives which, according to an Austrian report, were

lost before Kovno. On the 17th the fortress fell, though fighting still continued about the position until the 21st, when the bulk of the garrison withdrew safely along the Vilia line via Koshedary, and towards the north-east via Janoff. A thin rearguard was left to ensure the safety of the withdrawal, but the retreat was carried out in good order ; and again the Germans, after all their expenditure of life, were cheated out of the prey they so much desired. They neither took the garrison nor did they capture the fortress sufficiently soon to bring off their *coup* upon the Russian flank towards the south.

But the fall of this fortress was a considerable blow to the Russians, and the Russian commander was removed for the pooriness of his defence. The Grand Duke had designed to make a stand upon the Bug-Niemen line as a second line of defence. It was, in reality, their *first* line, since true Russian territory was not entered until the line was crossed. Of this line Kovno was an integral and a most important part. And its fall conditioned the fighting of the Russians for several weeks to come. The Russian Staff do not seem to have assimilated the lessons of Liège and Namur very thoroughly at this time, though they certainly made very good use of their fortresses, holding them as long as they could without risking the capture of any large number of troops. They were thus used as arrests, which, in military theory, the fortress ever is. Nevertheless, the Russian people felt the fall of each fortress as though it were a blow in the face. The Germans became jubilant as one after another fell into their hands. The civilians naturally did not see the thick lines of German dead which girdled the wall of every fortress. They could not be expected to count the cost when they were only told the prize, and this was so much exaggerated in the popular imagination. In one terrible week—and it is difficult to know for whom it was more terrible, the victor or the vanquished—Kovno, Novo Georgievsk, Bielsk, Osowiec, Kovel, and Brest fell.

**Novo Georgievsk.**—The siege of Novo Georgievsk exceeds that of Kovno in horror. It was, perhaps, more immediately valuable to the Germans, since it commanded the river way by which the Germans wished to get supplies and munitions to their advancing armies. That, in fact, was the chief reason why some 25,000 men—mostly militia—were left in the fortress, and ordered to hold it while their ammunition lasted. Of course, it also served to cover the retreat of the armies in the salient, by detaining a large force of investment which should have formed part of the pursuing force, hunting anew for the decorations the Kaiser had so far withheld.

While the fortress held, the northern German armies were impeded, and the efficiency of the Warsaw pursuit was seriously diminished. Hence, again, the wasteful tactics which had raised such a holocaust at Kovno. Very little time is gained by using infantry as artillery, and the cost is bound to be so high that it may hang like a millstone round the neck of the victorious general long after the siege has been forgotten. General von Beseler, the batterer of Antwerp, was in command for the main attack, with artillery of the same heavy calibre as was used at Kovno. Gallwitz struck down behind the fortress upon the 9th, and thus began the siege proper by cutting it off from the main armies ; though before this it had been under heavy fire in the attempt to carry the fortress by storm. The siege troops, all told, represented about 120,000 men, a great number to throw against so small a garrison. The fortress was girdled by a cincture of entrenchments, and the Russians retreated only when they were compelled to fall back, but the price they exacted was heavy. They stood to their machine guns and light artillery until they had made a horrible



slaughter. The bombardment ceased only to loose the infantry, who were thrown on to the entrenchments as though they too were simply shell. The Russian gunners in one or two points stood to their guns until they fainted from fatigue. Some of the guns were blocked by German bodies; and worn-out German soldiers sank down before the fainting Russian gunners, each alike unable to do more than glare at each other. Such was the slaughter that not even German music could spur on the troops to fresh attacks; and resort was made to serving the men with a mixture of brandy and ether to drug them to the risks they ran.

Five days after the fortress had been isolated, a breach had been driven in the northern sector of the defences. For four days after this the heavy siege guns were turned from the point of vantage thus gained upon one of the principal works with its adjacent supports, and on the 18th these were all reduced to a mass of wreckage. The heavy guns were then brought still farther in, and the remaining works came under the same treatment. The Russians withdrew across the Wkra stream, and again stood heroically behind their wire defences, firing their diminishing stores of ammunition, and even meeting the storming columns on the ruined works with their rifles and machine guns. On the 18th the outer defences were completely destroyed, and the Russians were compelled to withdraw to the second line, consisting of older and less powerful forts. The same concentration was made upon two of the inner forts. All the guns were trained upon them, and two days later they fell, and Beseler threw his massed columns again into the breach. The struggle at length came to be a hand-to-hand fight, and in these conditions the fortress fell. There are no words to describe adequately the splendid spirit of the defenders, older and little trained men, and indeed the attackers too showed astounding courage.

The fortress had delayed the Germans a fortnight. Even from the time of its complete investment it had held out for ten days. It was manned by about 25,000 men, and yet, in addition to its function of delaying, the little force had broken some five times its own strength. The Germans made much of the capture of this fortress, and indeed it seemed a deadly blow. But if the cost were as we have stated, what triumph was there in the victory? It was the Germans who had only a limited supply of men, and yet they had willingly, on two occasions, bartered men for position. The whole point underlying these spendthrift attacks was that they were a speculation undertaken for the chance of capturing one of the Russian armies.

The attacks upon Kovno and Novo Georgievsk had been shrewdly conceived, and with the capture of the fortresses not only the immediate object was achieved. The chance of striking down behind the Russian armies of the north was secured by the fall of Kovno, and the advance of the German pursuing armies towards Brest was no longer handicapped by an obstacle on one of the great railway avenues. Each of these results was barren in itself, since the delay had been sufficient to enable the Russian armies to fall back in an orderly fashion. But although cheated of these objects, the Germans had gained tangible advantages from the costly sieges. The Russian line of the Bug and the Niemen had been virtually carried, since by the fall of Kovno its northern flank was no longer secure. And by the fall of Novo Georgievsk the Germans had secured another chance of enveloping part of the Russian armies, since they could strike across from Novo Georgievsk while they thrust southwards from Kovno. The section of line between the fortresses was theoretically at their mercy.

The small fortress of Osowiec, which had gone through so many vicissitudes and fought so gallant a fight under the threat of isolation, was abandoned, and the garrison withdrew towards Bielostok. Even there they were far from safe, since Gallwitz had forced his way across the Narev to Bielsk, to the south and slightly to the east of Bielostok. They had made their way under great difficulty. In the Bielovieska forest, in addition to the natural difficulties of the ground, they had had to encounter herds of bison, the last European wild bison left. These beasts made short work of several companies whom they had taken by surprise.

The march of the German main armies upon Brest was conducted with great skill. If it had been possible to double the rate of advance, the debacle for which the Germans played might have happened. But despite their immense superiority in equipment, the Germans could not grasp the prize which they saw ever a little way off. They were still endeavouring to envelop some considerable part of the Russian army. Their first attempt had already failed. They had thought to hold the Russians about Warsaw, while they struck with incredible speed north and south against the flanks. If they had pierced the flanks then, they could have enveloped the Russians and caused them either to surrender or suffer annihilation. Their new attempt was even better, on *paper*, than the old. Clearly, if you can pin an enemy up against a wall, he must either give in or be killed. There was no wall here, but there was the vast stretch of the Pripet Marshes, which acted as a stone wedge behind Brest Litovski. Unless the Russians stood at Brest, they must be broken on the wedge, and their armies would be able no longer to act together. The Germans thought that, rather than suffer this handicap, the Russians would stand at Brest and risk a decisive battle.

The German theory was undoubtedly good, and the Russian Commander-in-Chief must have felt more than a little reluctance to abandon a fortress which was not only a defence and a pivot, but also a link between his armies. That decision, however, was taken, and no doubt the Russians reflected that the Germans could not break their unity upon the Pripet Marshes without to some extent breaking their own unity at the same time. The Russian decision was, nevertheless, a very courageous one, which called for the greatest self-restraint and coolness.

The Russian dispositions were even better than their theory. Every mile between Warsaw and Ivangorod was held to ransom by the Grand Duke; every mile advance cost its price; and as the days dragged on and the advance became slower, the interested spectator from afar seemed to catch glimpses of a gigantic struggle preparing for the defence of Brest and the unity of the Russian armies. The movements of the Germans appeared to be undecided, and it was only as one significant fact after another became known that a connected idea of the German plan could be obtained. Prince Leopold's armies, with those of General von Woyrsch, marched east and north-east respectively, and it became evident that they were taking up their positions to form the left wing of the concerted attack upon Brest. They crossed the Bug a little west of Nemirov, and bore towards the north-east along the southern boundaries of the Bielovieska forest, in the direction of Prushani. When they had reached that point Brest was already threatened from the north-east. Mackensen and the Archduke Ferdinand, who were to form the western part of the attack, marched from the south and linked up with Prince Leopold and Woyrsch. As the chief part of his force, there was drawn along the railway the huge battering ram of guns which had broken the Russian line in the



south. General von Linsingen had disappeared from view for some time, and when he was next heard of he was in a position directly threatening the Russian communications with Kovel and Rovno. He had advanced towards Vyzva. On his right, General Puhallo was fighting towards Kovel with a force of cavalry. These dispositions in reality reduplicated the situation of Warsaw—the Brest-Minsk railway representing the Narev line, and the Brest-Kovel-Rovno the line of the Vistula. The difference was, as we have seen, that behind Brest lay the marsh barrier upon which the Germans hoped to break the Russian armies.

The Russians, however, having learned the lessons of Kovno and Novo Georgievsk, treated what had been considered their greatest fortress as though it were merely a section of defended front on their line. A skeleton force was left inside to hold the German main attack, after the bulk of the guns had been withdrawn. It was necessary to hold on this section of the line, in order to prevent the enemy attack from the north and north-east becoming too strong to cope with. Meanwhile, the German command strove their utmost to draw more of the Russians towards the south and south-west, in order to make their preponderance on the northern sector as great as possible. Alexeieff chose as the line of his withdrawal the very direction from which Prince Leopold and Woyrsch were trying to envelop him. That line had to be held open against the threat of Gallwitz, as well as of the Prince and Woyrsch; but if it were kept open, the direct line of retreat of the Brest armies—towards Pinsk—was also safeguarded.

The manœuvring gave place to fighting, and the fighting reached its climax on 25th August. On that day all the scattered remnants of the fighting over the great front, north and south of Brest, reached a finale. The siege guns had been at work on the fortress day and night already, and the small garrison of 20,000 men had heroically withstood the tremendous rain of shell. On this day, Alexeieff, withdrawing towards Minsk, gave battle from the north of Brest to the upper waters of the Narev on the northern edge of the Bielovieska forest. He met the armies of Prince Leopold and Woyrsch and part of Mackensen's force about the river Liesna, a tributary of the Bug, which forms a defensive line in front of the railway line to Minsk up to the southern boundaries of the forest. On the northern edge he met Gallwitz's force. He dealt faithfully with all, and the Germans were made to feel the full meaning of the splendid material which formed the Tsar's armies.

In the centre the fortress played a most heroic part. For its adequate defence it required at least five times the force which had been left behind; but it was not until the afternoon that Arz, the Austrian Field-Marshal, was able to gain a footing in the defences. After all the battering it had received, the fortress was expected to fall to the massed attack which had taken Kovno and Novo Georgievsk. The price exacted of the Austrian troops, who thus carried the outer section on the south, was heavy. The Russians coolly held to their machine guns and light artillery, and met the marching columns advancing in full daylight with a fire that shattered their ranks. On the west an outer fort had also been carried, and the hours of the fortress were numbered. But it was not actually taken until night, when, under cover of darkness, the Germans made their final storming attacks, and the Russians withdrew towards Pinsk. The fortress had fallen, but it had been even more methodically stripped than Warsaw. That city the Russians had only stripped and robbed of anything which could be useful to the Austro-Germans. Brest was not only stripped; it was destroyed. The entering Germans found that the Russians had fought the

guns until they had been battered out of shape by the Austrian siege artillery. Then, before they withdrew, they destroyed the bridge and fired the market-place. The Austrians and Germans entered a smoking ruin, and the garrisons of the forts were able to join the army which fell back upon Pinsk.

Meanwhile the Russian armies had been regrouped and the command reorganised. At the beginning of the war the armies had formed two groups—the north-western and south-western, under Zhilinsky and Ivanoff respectively. Alexeieff, upon whom the command of the north-western group had fallen after Ruszky's retirement in the spring, had automatically taken under his direction army after army as it left Galicia under the readjustments necessitated by the German offensive. He came at length to command nine armies, and a change was made in mid-August to give him some relief. Ruszky, restored to health from his stay in the Caucasus, returned to the army and took command of the northern (or Petrograd) army, leaving Alexeieff in charge of the central (or western) army, and Ivanoff of the southern group. As the retreat continued the holding of a continuous line was abandoned, and the army fell back upon the historical arrangement of troops in open warfare.

## XVI. VICTORY LOST BY A DAY.

THE Dardanelles situation, as we have seen, settled down to the rhythm of trench warfare towards the end of May, and the small movements in June did nothing to accelerate the pace of the struggle. Yet clearly, of all places, this was the last where the Allies could resign themselves to a siege war. The whole meaning of the campaign was that the Straits should be forced rapidly in order that Russia might have the relief to her economic position which Western markets would give, and also that the Allies should be able to throw into the country the munitions which she needed so much more than they. If the campaign were to be allowed to settle down to a position akin to that on the Western front, it ceased to have any value to Britain or to the Allies. The British could only continue to lose increasing numbers of men by casualties and sickness, and with the approach of winter the situation would be far worse. The prevalence of sickness and the high casualty rate had already worn the organisation threadbare. There were cases of men suffering from dysentery fed on bread and jam because there was nothing else at hand. There were cases of wounded men sent home in troopships owing to the lack of sufficient hospital ships.

Sir Ian Hamilton realised fully the need of an immediate solution, and it is mere justice to point out that he showed an extraordinary grasp of the possibilities of the situation. In his dispatch \* which covers the last section of his command in Gallipoli he has left a memorable document, conspicuous not only for its literary ability, but also for the lucidity with which he gripped his task and the unusual versatility of device he brought to bear upon it. It is necessary to point this out in view of the fact that, as the dispatch shows with almost cruel clearness, he was a failure as a *leader*, and was a little ungenerous in his criticism of his subordinates, who, after all, seem to have been guilty of no greater fault than that of their chief—the inability to exact obedience from subordinates.

\* Quotations in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are from the dispatch.



Again, the failure of General Hamilton must not be confused with the bungling which arranged the expedition at a time when the Turks had been completely forewarned of the Allies' intentions. He cannot be held responsible for the smallness of the force placed at his disposal, nor blamed for not adopting tactics which a greater force would have made feasible. His problem was to cope with the situation with a force which in all never amounted to much more than 100,000 men, without the heavy siege train which the student of tactics considered necessary. Naval guns with their flat trajectory cannot compensate, however great their number, for the lack of howitzers capable of indirect fire.

The plan adopted was to press forward from Anzac with a reinforced army, attacking, at the same time, with a new force to be landed at Suvla Bay. In one supreme advance the troops were to capture Hill 305 (or 971—Koja Chemen), and using the leverage so gained to seize the waist of the peninsula.

There were many points in its favour. Suvla was but a mile farther from the base, Mudros, and the bay would give a submarine-proof base and a harbour sheltered from the gales, except those from the south-west. General Hamilton came to the conclusion that when the reinforcements arrived he could win through to Maidos, leaving behind him a well-protected line of communications starting from the Bay of Suvla. The venture was to be pushed through at night, and this made it imperative that his plans should take account of the moon. The reinforcements did not come to hand in time to anticipate the July moon, and consequently he was driven to wait for the moon of August.

On 17th July Lieutenant-General Hunter Weston was invalided home. Commander first of the 29th Division and then of the 8th Corps, of which it formed part, he was a capable soldier, and his loss was deeply felt in the critical battle of August. General the Hon. Sir Frederick Stopford, who was to take command of the 9th Corps for the Suvla attack, assumed command of the 8th Corps for a few days.

August 6th was a dark night, the moon rising only at 2 A.M. The attack was therefore fixed for the evening of the 6th, and there was an elaboration of detail to distract the Turks from the main strategy of the attack. The feints consisted of a surprise landing by a force of 300 men on the northern shore of the Gulf of Saros; a series of demonstrations by the French against the coast of Syria over against Mitylene; a concentration and ostentatious inspection by the commanders at Mitylene; the drawing to order, in Egypt, of a complete set of maps of Asia; as well as much secret service work.

The Turks were caught completely off their guard on the dawn of 7th August. The amount of work and forethought entailed by these operations was very considerable; and the arrangements for the throwing into the different areas of such masses of troops, many of them inexperienced, together with their full complements of ammunition, stores, animals, vehicles, etc., threw the greatest strain upon the General Staff, whose "clearness and completeness of their orders for concentration and landing will hereafter be studied as models in military academies."

Water was an item of concern to the operations, and a vast accumulation was made with the water stored in reservoirs and petroleum tins. To read of the achievements rapidly effected by these soldiers gives one to pause. Work which in peace time might have taken years to achieve, with interminable red tape crushing out all initiative, was here easily brought to perfection in a few weeks. There was a high-level reservoir at Anzac requiring a special pump to fill it. And the extra-

ordinary volume of transport involved seems to have been handled with ease and dispatch.

When all was ready the whole Gallipoli adventure throbbed like a huge machine, well-oiled, highly organised, and on the verge of starting into life at the touch of the lever. Sir Ian Hamilton was on the island of Imbros, almost equidistant from Helles, Anzac, and Suvla, with cables conveying every change and movement, which was the brain centre of the whole system. If it had also been the *will* centre, the fate of the operations would almost certainly have been utterly different.

In every war, time is one of the chief determinants; and it was in Gallipoli, as elsewhere, of the essence of the problem. The enemy was to be encouraged to imagine troops attacking in one place, in order that when he at length discovered from which point the blow was to fall there would not be time to readjust his dispositions before the crucial hours had passed. "At Helles the attack of the 6th was directed against 1,200 yards of Turkish front opposite our own right and right centre . . . at 3.50 P.M. On the left large sections of the enemy's line were carried, but on our centre and right the Turks were encountered in masses, and the attack, pluckily and perseveringly as it was pressed, never had any real success. . . . Many of our men fought it out where they stood to the last, but by nightfall none of the enemy's line remained in our possession."

This set-back was in nowise the fault of the troops. That ardour which only dashed itself to pieces against the enemy's strong entrenchments and numerous stubborn defenders on 6th August would, a month earlier, have achieved notable success. But the *moral* and strength of the Turks had by this time risen to more serious heights since the June and July encounters. Three things contributed to this renaissance of Turkish spirit. The great Austro-German advance in Galicia and Poland was known to the Turks even before it was known to the Allied troops. Besides this, the troops who had been so severely handled at Helles had been replaced by two new divisions. The third factor in the new *moral* and numerical strength of the Turks was due to a fact which could hardly have been foreseen. When the attack was actually launched it was found that the Turks were packed in their trenches, ready for an offensive against the Allies. The British attack had anticipated theirs by but a few hours. The attack was continued on the 7th, though the Turkish counter-attack was then in progress. The following day two especially furious counter-attacks were made—one in the early morning and the other at dusk. But the Lancastrian regiment (6th Lancashire Fusiliers and 4th East Lancashire Regiment) were conspicuous for a certain cool and stubborn courage, and their bayonets were too deadly. Not until the next morning, the 9th, was the situation sufficiently quiet to allow the troops who had been fighting incessantly to be relieved.

The British attacks were made with the utmost spirit, though the men knew that their *rôle* was but secondary to the main plan. The Turks, already concentrated for attack, were compelled to summon reinforcements. And though the ground won was not considerable, it was of some tactical importance, and the main object of the attack—the holding of the Turks on that front to prevent them relieving the sectors selected for the main blow—was amply achieved.

General Birdwood was responsible for the attack upon Chunuk Bair, and his plans were so perfect that the Commander-in-Chief could think of no improvement to suggest. Hiding-places were carefully prepared at Anzac to accommodate the reinforcements with the huge amount of material necessary. The ships had to



carry the men at the blackest hours of the nights of the 4th, 5th, and 6th, and it was General Birdwood's business to get them by daylight out of the way of the prying aeroplanes and of the observers from the many points of vantage in the Turkish lines. Hostile riflemen were stationed not twenty feet from the British lines, at points overlooking the beaches. And the Turkish reconnaissance was very good; yet the amphibious operations worked without a hitch, and under the very eyes of the enemy the large force was landed, distributed, and hidden for three days. In all, General Birdwood had under his command 37,000 rifles and 72 guns, and his force was supported by 2 cruisers, 4 monitors, and 2 destroyers.

The situation in front of the Anzac troops was strange. The ridge, which commanded Midos and the Narrows, was not a mile from the British lines. Midos itself and the Narrows lay to the south-east of the positions, the extreme right flank being about two and a half miles from the road running to Midos, and about three and a half miles from the Narrows. This point on the right flank lay over against the formidable Turkish entrenchments known as Lone Pine, and the British line stretched thence to the north and slightly to the east. Lone Pine was one of the essential links in the Turkish defence system. It was against this position the initial move was made from Anzac upon the afternoon of 6th August. The attack was just being made at Helles, and the Turks were contesting their positions on that sector when this new offensive was directed against Lone Pine. It was not the main part of the operation, but was to be pressed as a diversion.

Lone Pine was a strongly entrenched point on the south-western end of a plateau which lay in front of the salient in the British lines known as "the Pimple." It was lavishly defended by wire. There was a stout timber roof and underground covered ways to points of support, the whole offering but an eighth of a mile frontage to attack, with the advantages of enfilading fire preserved to the Turks. Brigadier-General N. M. Smyth, with the 1st Australian Brigade, was detailed for the attack, and when the command was given two lines left their trenches at the same moment to race across the 60 to 120 yards between the two fronts. A third line left almost immediately afterwards in support. Across the bullet-swept stretch of ground the men ran with splendid courage. Shell of all sorts tore the ground to bits before them and cut swathes among the lines, but the men were not to be daunted.

The worst part was yet to come. They got to the wire, rushed past it, only to find the Turks securely hidden beneath their feet. The soldiers tried to lift off the heavy pine beams, and by combining into parties they achieved this, and leaped upon the enemy in the dark galleries below. In seventeen minutes from the beginning of the attack the Australians were engaged in force, deep in the enemy entrenchments. "The hand-to-hand fighting in the semi-obscurity of the trenches was prolonged and very bitterly contested. To make room for the fighting men the dead were ranged in rows on either side of the gangway. After the first violence of the counter-attacks had abated, 1,000 corpses—our own and Turkish—were dragged out from the trenches."

In about twenty minutes the position had been won, and was being consolidated. But the value of the capture was emphasised by the counter-attacks, which began almost at once and were continued without cessation for almost a week. The numbers of Turkish prisoners taken were a real danger in the first hours of the morning of 7th August. Until the morning of the 9th the counter-attacks were continued in force, but by that time the demoralisation had set in, and the later attacks

were not made with such numbers. This success, achieved immediately, and held against all counter-attacks, won the strange immunity from opposition for the Suvla landings. It was incidental and meant as a diversion; but it had been brilliantly chosen, and performed its function perfectly.

The main attack was directed towards the summits of the Sari Bair ridge, which culminates in Chunuk Bair. The ridge runs roughly parallel to the coast line,



The Anzac Front.

towards which it sends spurs, separated from one another by irregular gullies filled with dense jungle. The highest peak is Koja Chemen (Hill 305, or 971), and it is approached from the coast by a rugged aisle called Aghyl Dere. Two gullies lead up to Chunuk Bair, the main ridge, Chailak Dere and Sazli Beit Dere. Major-General Godley had been placed in command of the main attack, and his force was divided into right and left assaulting columns. The task of the right covering



column was to take, with bayonet and bomb only, Bauchop's Hill and Table Top. These peaks, overlooking Chailak Dere, had to be cleared in order that the right assaulting column could make its way to Chunuk Bair. One of the outposts in their way was Old No. 3 Post, a redoubt of such strength that it could not be rushed by simple force of arms.

The manner in which this point was seized throws an amazing light upon the conditions of warfare since the system of pounding trenches to pieces has come into practice. As the redoubt could not be taken by simple assault, the plan was to take it by stratagem. It was known that the Turks would leave their trenches during a bombardment, returning in time to meet attacks by infantry. Accordingly the following plan was devised. Every night for some time a warship threw its searchlight upon the redoubt exactly at 9 P.M., and opened a heavy bombardment for ten minutes. Then came an interval of ten minutes, and another bombardment which ended exactly at 9.30. It was thought that after a few nights the Turks would take the beam of the searchlight as a signal to leave their trenches until the shelling was over. That was exactly what happened. But on the night of the 6th, the right covering column began its journey when the searchlight was switched on. Outside the beam of light, where the darkness derived an added intensity by contrast, the men crept forward. The thunder of the guns made their progress inaudible. By 9.30 the men were at the redoubt, and when the second bombardment ended they poured into the empty entrenchments. In an hour and a half the position and the whole network of surrounding entrenchments were in our hands.

At that moment, the assault of the rest of the right covering column, directed against Bauchop's Hill, had already gained a considerable success. The hill position was a tangle of peak and ravine, choked with scrub, and heavily entrenched everywhere. But by 1 A.M. it was captured. At the same time the attack was launched upon Table Top, a peak connected with the Old No. 3 Post by a razor back. This was an obstacle of such difficulty that in theory it would never have been considered possible to carry it. The flanks are so steep "that the height gives an impression of a mushroom shape—of the summit bulging out over its stem." The attack on this position was carried out under cover of a heavy bombardment by the warship which had assisted in the capture of Old No. 3 Post. The New Zealanders, under Brigadier-General Russell, were irresistible. These heights were scaled in spite of a deadly fire, in spite of every obstacle which art and nature could provide. The plateau was held by midnight, and this completed the task of the right covering column. Its work of preparing the way for the assaulting column had been brilliantly performed, and had not lacked the crown of success. To this there was but one exception.

The northern ravine, by which the British intended to press their way to Chunuk Bair, Chailak Dere, had to be opened for the advance of the right assaulting column. But the covering column found the river bed, the only feasible pathway, completely closed by barbed wire entanglements of unusual height, depth, and solidity. Covering the entanglements was an enemy entrenchment which went straight across the gully. It was the New Zealanders who, with heavy losses, carried this obstacle also.

The right assaulting column was, by midnight, operating in the two ravines, Chailak Dere and Sazli Beit Dere. The Chailak Dere troops pressed steadily up towards the heart of the enemy position, while at 1.30 a fierce fight was being waged for the possession of a lower shelf of Sari Bair ridge, Rhododendron Spur. After

severe fighting the troops forced their way to the top, and entrenched themselves upon Rhododendron Spur, within a quarter of a mile of the main objective, Chunuk Bair.

Meanwhile, the columns on the left had also been winning laurels. The left covering column operating in the ravine of Aghyl Dere won a conspicuous and speedy success. The 4th South Wales Borderers, under their gallant colonel, Lieutenant-Colonel Gillespie, rushed the positions upon Damakjelic Bair, and took the whole ridge about 1.30 A.M.

The left assaulting column found its way unexpectedly clear, and took two Turkish officers in their pyjamas. The surprise was complete, but it could not rob the country in the line of advance of its natural terrors. It was in the dark of the night. The scrub was dense, the climbing steep and almost incessant. The men were driven to make progress upon their hands and knees. There were bullets singing about them all the time. Under such conditions exhaustion set in, and found the assaulting column some distance up the Aghyl Dere gully, but not in possession of the main ridge. Such was the position at dawn on the 7th. The right column was entrenched upon Rhododendron Spur but a quarter of a mile from Chunuk Bair, and the 5th and 6th Gurkhas had penetrated on the north-east to within a short distance of the main ridge of Chunuk Bair. The enemy had by this time settled down to the defence and taken the measure of the attack. Reserves were being hurried up from Battleship Hill to stem the advance from Rhododendron Spur. The guns were trained upon the reserves, but the right assaulting column was checked, and could not advance any farther. The troops clung to the Asmak Dere watershed, which looks to Hill 305 and threatens Chunuk Bair from the north. The men were exhausted, and could only nurse themselves and wait for the night.

"The right covering force were in occupation of Table Top, Old No. 3 Post, and Bauchop Hill, which General Russell had been ordered to maintain with two regiments of Mounted Rifles, so that he might have two other regiments and the Maori contingent available to move as required. The left covering force held Damakjelic Bair. . . . The Lone Pine work was being furiously disputed." The counter-attack at Helles was being pressed with the greatest vigour. Thus, over the whole of the British front there were furious engagements except at the place where they were expected, Suvla. The landing there, which was to have disorganised the defences of Chunuk Bair, had, so far, given no appreciable relief. As General Birdwood says of the Anzac men: "The troops had performed a feat which is without parallel;" but, though the first phase of the new attempt on the Narrows had ended, Chunuk Bair was not yet seized.

Three columns were being prepared for a fresh advance upon the morning of 8th August, and as soon as the light was strong enough, the troops were observed marching along the Chunuk Bair ridge. Victory was in the hands of the Allies. General Johnston's column, a force typical of the British Empire, raced to the top and fixed themselves firmly upon the south-western slopes and crest of the main knoll. There were Gloucesters, New Zealanders, Maoris, and Welsh Pioneers among the troops who carried the height, but the gallant colonel who led the advance, Lieutenant-Colonel W. G. Malone, fell on the crest as he was marking out the line to be held. The 7th Gloucesters, belonging to the New Army, achieved the incredible. They had suffered heavily in the advance, but the summit gained they suffered more heavily still. So hot was the fire that they could not properly entrench themselves;



and, practically without cover, they had to stand against repeated attacks. From midday to sunset the battalion fought on without any officers, a feat which establishes a proud record for the spirit of the new troops. "Every single officer, company sergeant-major, or company quartermaster-sergeant was either killed or wounded."

Still no help came from Suvla, and it was decided to hold what had been won and nurse the troops for a decisive great attack, in which the foothold on Chunuk Bair would be used as a pivot. Early in the morning of 9th August the Chunuk Bair ridge and Hill Q were heavily shelled. General Baldwin, with the 38th Infantry Brigade, had been dispatched up Chailak Dere to General Johnston's headquarters. The narrow track of his advance was kept clear, guides were provided, and everything was done to facilitate his rapid journey; but in the darkness and strange country, by unfortunate mischance, the column got lost, and did not arrive at the Farm on Chunuk Bair till 5.15 A.M. Meanwhile, Major C. G. L. Allanson, with the 6th Gurkhas of the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade, had forced his way up the slopes of Sari Bair, reached the neck between Chunuk Bair and Hill Q, and saw far beneath the silver ribbon of the Hellespont, to deliver which the whole campaign was shaped. They could see not only the waters of the Straits, but the Asiatic shores, along which motor transport was bringing supplies to the lighters. With the 6th Lancashires the Gurkhas even began to attack down the eastern slopes, firing upon the retreating enemy.

In those few moments a supreme victory was won and lost. Baldwin's column should have been already sweeping the whole ridge, and thereby supporting the advanced troops. But they were still a long way off, and instead of their timely succour there came upon the intrepid Gurkhas and Lancashires a storm of heavy shell. For a few moments the elation of success gave way to the confusion of an utter surprise. That chance was seized at once by the Turkish commander. His troops were rallied and flung back in a heavy counter-attack. Under this pressure the stormers, who had looked upon the face of victory and had been fired by its elation, were forced up the eastern slopes, over the crest, and down to the places whence they had started. Baldwin's command in a few minutes were ready to support, but it was too late. The Turks had secured the whole of the dominating crest, and were holding it in vast numbers. The men had to be withdrawn to a position near the Farm, and the enemy turned his attention to the New Zealand troops and two New Army battalions, who were still holding the south-west half of the main knoll of Chunuk Bair—a position important to the British, but vital for the Turks.

During the night the troops who had held the critical position were relieved. They had lost heavily, and were so exhausted by the almost continuous fighting that there was no time to entrench properly. In some places entrenchments were but a few inches deep and no wire had been erected. It was under these circumstances that the new defenders met the grand Turkish counter-attack upon the morning of the 10th. In such numbers the Turks advanced that they simply overwhelmed the defence. The Wilts, caught in the open, were almost annihilated. The Turks swept over the crest, and getting round General Baldwin's column forced him to evacuate his positions under the peril of annihilation. The men here suffered heavy loss. But the Turks, apparently determined not to leave the point at issue, continued to pour over the crest of Chunuk Bair and Battleship Hill. It was at this

point they began to pay for their success. Ships' guns, mountain and field artillery, poured into the concentrated masses, tearing gaps in them, but not prevailing upon them to stop. But as they poured over the crest and down the western slopes of Chunuk Bair they were met by the fire of ten machine guns belonging to the New Zealand Brigade. The guns continued their deadly business until the barrels were red-hot, and inflicted terrible losses on the swarming numbers.

Great forces of the Turks were at the same time thrown against the Farm and the spurs to the north-east, where the struggle was so fierce and terrible that it may be considered the culmination of the four days' fighting. The British lines were broken, and the men were hurled to the foot of the hill. There they were met by Captain Street, of the Staff, who was supervising the transport of food and water. "Without a word, unhesitatingly, they followed him back to the Farm, where they plunged again into the midst of that series of struggles in which generals fought in the ranks, and men dropped their scientific weapons and caught one another by the throat." The last units of the general reserve were hurried to the scene, and the fury of the fighting at last died down, and the Turks fell back to the eastern side of the ridge. Later in the day two further attacks were made by the Turks, but they were thrown back with heavy loss, though the 4th South Wales Borderers lost their gallant leader, Lieutenant-Colonel Gillespie.

By the evening of the 10th, after four days' fighting, General Birdwood had lost about a third of his force, some 12,000 men, including many officers. The 13th Division of the New Army, under Major-General F. C. E. Shaw, alone accounted for half of this number. The men had achieved incredible things, but they had not brought off the *coup* which the Commander-in-Chief had planned. At times he had thought of throwing his reserves into the battle, "where probably they would have turned the scale." But the difficulty of the water supply caused him to desist. The men were reduced to a pint a day, and the thirst was such that when the mules arrived with the water, "men would rush to them in swarms just to lick the moisture that had exuded through the canvas bags." How far General Hamilton was right in thus refraining from throwing in his last reserve is a question which can hardly be decided as yet. At first sight it seems that if water transport were the only reason for holding his hand, surely this was sufficiently changed when the reserves were wanted. A third of the men were out of the firing line, and that meant probably a considerable number dead—at least as great a number as the reserve. The *coup* had failed through lack of support. General Baldwin's unfortunate delay, though not blameworthy, lost the precious moments when the Gurkhas and Lancashires were looking upon the promised land. It was a pure misfortune, and the gallant general fell in the later stages of the struggle.

**Suvla Bay.**—The general reserve was not held back by misfortune, but by a decision of General Hamilton. The third possible support—the support indeed upon which the Commander-in-Chief had rightly counted—was lacking, according to the dispatch, through "inertia." The dispatch does not spare the commanders of this force, and it is difficult to understand precisely what happened. It is clear that the Suvla Bay force went to bits in some way, but the reasons for it are still obscure. The command seems to have been as different from that at Anzac as light is from dark. There the troops, never meant to bear so fiery an ordeal, won to the peaks which were virtual victory. The Suvla Bay expedition achieved nothing of any account, and perhaps one may discover the reason in the difference in supreme



command. General Birdwood, a splendid officer, prudent, far-seeing, yet bold and inspiring, commanded at Anzac. General Stopford, a less generous, less decided man, whose character is written in the dispatch by negative points, commanded, or rather *failed to command*, at Suvla. It is characteristic that General Hamilton wholly approved and praised General Birdwood's plan; but General Stopford suggested a change in the plans for his landing, to which, indeed, General Hamilton agreed, but with misgiving—an agreement which history will probably say should, in those circumstances, never have been given.

The troops placed under the command of Lieutenant-General the Hon. Sir F. Stopford were nearly the whole of the 9th Army Corps, and comprised some 10,000



The Suvla Bay Landing.

troops in all. The Turks in this quarter of the peninsula did not amount to more than about 4,000, and their lines were not highly organised. It would seem that General Stopford's task was perfectly simple. It had originally been planned that the three brigades should all land on the beach south of Niebruniessi Point, which is the southern arm of the bay. The weather was calm, and the men were embarked in motor-lighters and picket-boats, towed by destroyers. For the water supply, so necessary in such an expedition, petrol tins, milk cans, and camel tanks had been accumulated, and there were 3,700 mules and 1,750 water-carts for Anzac and Suvla.

The three brigades—32nd, 33rd, and 34th—got ashore almost simultaneously, and the surprise was complete. At the beach, suggested by the General command-

ing, the 34th Brigade came across the only difficulties of the expedition. The shore was not so suitable, and the lighters grounded a long way from it, drawing the fire of the enemy. Fortunately the numbers of the enemy here were small, and the storming of Lala Baba by the 9th West Yorkshire and the 6th Yorkshire Regiments put a term to their activities. These regiments and the rest of the 32nd Brigade then went to the help of the 34th Brigade, who were being held up by the enemy on Hill 10. They had extended their hold and were driving the enemy northward along Karakol Dag.

Dawn came and the light allowed the enemy to shell the invaders. It was at this point that the first signs of the weakness which ruined the whole expedition appeared. "No one seems to have been present who could take hold of the two brigades, the 32nd and 34th, and launch them in a concerted and cohesive attack. Consequently there was confusion and hesitation." The Turks, as a little later with the Gurkhas and Lancashires on Chunuk Bair, at once attempted to improve the occasion; but the 9th Lancashire Fusiliers and the 11th Manchester Regiment drove them back in disorder over Hill 10, which was now flaming with the gorse fires started by the Turks. It was at dawn that six battalions of the 10th Division arrived and were landed, by decision of the naval authorities, at one of the beaches south of Niebruniessi Point, instead of on the beach in Suvla Bay. The General might surely have altered his plan to throw the whole 10th Division northward along Kiretch Tepe Sirt. As it was, the troops suffered a considerable number of casualties, were late and tired, and entered the fight from a much less effective angle.

The enemy, driven over Hill 10, retreated eastwards towards Sulajik and Kuchuk Anafarta Ova, followed by the 34th and 32nd Brigades of the 11th Division and the 31st Brigade of the 10th Division, which had entered the struggle between Hill 10 and the Salt Lake instead of on the left of the 34th Brigade. Sir Ian's summing up must be given literally: "I have failed in my endeavours to get some live human detail about the fighting which followed"—a very damning remark—"but the brunt of it fell upon the 31st Brigade," consisting of the 6th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, the 6th Royal Irish Fusiliers, and the 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The vital point here was Ismail Oglu Tepe, which lies south-east of Sulajik and Yilghin Burnu (or Chocolate Hill). By the evening of the 7th General Hammersley had taken Chocolate Hill, but he reported that he could make no farther progress, and the night found his brigade and the 31st holding a line through Chocolate Hill, Sulajik, to near Kuchuk Anafarta Ova. Meanwhile, Sir Bryan Mahon, with the rest of the 10th Division, was clearing the Kiretch Tepe Sirt ridge to the north. The weather was hot, and the Irish regiments suffered much from lack of water, of which they were deprived for nearly thirty-six hours. General Hamilton leaves it to be understood that this was partly due to mere stupidity in those responsible for the distribution of the water.

A whole day had gone and little had been accomplished. "And now General Stopford, recollecting the vast issues which hung upon his success in forestalling the enemy, urged his divisional commanders to push on." These commanders reported themselves unable to move. The men were exhausted, and lack of water had told on the troops. "These pleas for delay were perfectly well founded. But it seems to have been overlooked that the half-defeated Turks in front of us were equally exhausted and disorganised, and that an advance was the simplest and swiftest method of solving the water trouble and every other sort of trouble." That, of



course, is the plain sense of the situation, but it does not seem to have appealed to any of the commanders, and Sir Ian's dispatch is dispassionately revealing: "Be this as it may, the objections overbore the Corps Commander's resolution. He had now got ashore three batteries (two of them mountain batteries), and the great guns of the ships were ready to speak at his request. But it was lack of artillery support which finally decided him to acquiesce in a policy of going slow, which, by the time it reached the troops, became translated into a period of inaction. The divisional generals were, in fact, informed that, 'in view of the inadequate artillery support,' General Stopford did not wish them to make frontal attacks on the entrenched positions, but desired them, so far as possible, to try and turn any trenches which were met with. Within the terms of this instruction lies the root of our failure to make use of the priceless daylight hours of the 8th of August. Driving power was required, and even a certain ruthlessness, to brush aside pleas for a respite for tired troops. The one fatal error was inertia. And inertia prevailed."

It can readily be admitted that there is "a certain ruthlessness" about these words; and even if they were justified, it seems a little strange that Sir Ian, of all men, should grip the position so clearly. It was a fatal lack of leadership which lost the day. But the lack seems as clear on the part of Sir Ian as on General Stopford's part; for when he realised the position he was himself as impotent to get the troops in motion as General Stopford. He had no arts to coax, cajole, or command the hesitating generals.

There was no evidence, says the dispatch, of enemy artillery, except some eight shells dropped into Suvla Bay on the 8th. Entrenched positions simply did not exist; and a Staff officer sent to Suvla early on the 8th reported the absence of gunfire, the smallness of the amount of rifle fire, and the enemy's apparent weakness. General Hamilton determined to leave his headquarters and go to Suvla, some fifty minutes away. He reached H.M.S. *Jonquil*, in which was installed General Stopford's headquarters, about 5 P.M., and found that the commander had, as it were, settled down to the lack of movement on the 8th. Little was achieved in those critical hours, and little was even attempted. The General commanding the 11th Division had ordered strong patrols to push forward preliminary to an advance on the following day, about which he was confident. But he afterwards reported that "little was done in this respect." It was known that Turkish reinforcements were on the way, and this priceless twelve hours was given them so that they should arrive in time.

General Hamilton "urged" that even then an attempt should be made upon the hills, but was told it was impossible. The men were rested, watered, and fed, so those excuses obtained no longer. "But the divisional commanders disliked the idea of an advance by night, and General Stopford did not care, it seemed, to force their hands." The really extraordinary thing is that General Hamilton should not see how clear a condemnation of himself all this is. For if General Stopford was to blame for not forcing the hands of the divisional commanders, surely General Hamilton was to blame for not forcing General Stopford's hands. "So it came about," writes Sir Ian, "that I was driven to see whether I could not, myself, put concentration of effort and purpose into the direction of the large number of men ashore. The Corps Commander made no objection. He declared himself to be as eager as I could be to advance. The representations made by the divisional com-

manders had seemed to him insuperable. If I could see my way to get over them no one would be more pleased than himself."

So General Hamilton went ashore and found all peaceful ; but the commander of the 11th Division, Major-General Hammersley, was obdurate about the impossibility of getting out orders for a night attack so late (6 P.M.), as the troops were scattered. The General "admitted" that one brigade was concentrated and ready to move : "I therefore issued a direct order that, even if it were only with this 32nd Brigade, the advance should begin at the earliest possible moment, so that a portion at least of the 11th Division should anticipate the Turkish reinforcements on the heights, and dig themselves in there upon some good tactical point." What happened after this is not easy to say ; but the brigade, which was said to be concentrated at 6 P.M., did not actually begin to advance till 4 A.M. on 9th August, because the units of the brigade were said to be "scattered." When the brigade did advance it met with less opposition than the units which started later ; and General Hamilton is probably correct in saying that if the whole division had advanced on the preceding evening, the heights in front of them would probably have been taken.

The advance, when it did take place, met with opposition which showed that the reinforcements had arrived. The losses were serious, and although the advance at one time reached the critical summit, it was ultimately compelled to fall back. The following day the infantry brigades of the 53rd (Territorial) Division, which composed General Hamilton's reserve, were thrown into the fresh attempt to gain the Anafarta ridge ; but the moment had passed, though General Stopford holds that seasoned troops even then would have prevailed. The Turks were now three times as strong as they had been on 7th August. The infantry of the 54th Division was thrown in on the night of the 12th. On the following afternoon a battalion of Norfolks, who were on the right of the line, finding themselves less vigorously opposed, pressed on. Their Colonel, Sir H. Beauchamp, "a bold, self-confident officer," fought on and on. Some of the men fell back, but the Colonel with 16 officers and 250 men continued to press forward, and were never heard of again.

The attack dragged on. There were several other movements, but nothing which essentially improved the position. A general who really is undecided can, of course, risk the lives of his whole command by actions not properly pressed, slowly initiated, and allowed to get out of hand. On the evening of 15th August General Stopford handed over the command of the 9th Corps, and Major-General H. de B. de Lisle was appointed to take over the temporary command. The Turks had, at this point, about 110,000 rifles to the British 95,000, who were disposed as follows : Lieutenant-General Davies (commanding the 8th Corps), in the south, had 23,000 rifles, while the French beside him had 17,000 ; Lieutenant-General Birdwood had 25,000 rifles at Anzac ; and General de Lisle's command at Suvla amounted to 30,000 rifles. Opposed to Anzac and Suvla there were about 75,000 rifles, and on the south there were about 35,000. All the benefits of surprise had been lost. The enemy was now in force, prepared for all emergencies. The real struggle for the Narrows was over.

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General Hamilton cabled home for drafts to make good the loss in his depleted units. The British divisions were by this time 45,000 under establishment. And, besides these troops, General Hamilton wanted 50,000 fresh rifles. With such resources he felt he might still win through. It is strange this perennial cry for num-



bers when the leadership fails. General Hamilton had other small attacks to wage, but with the failure at Suvla on the critical days of 7th and 8th August all attempt to force the Narrows died down for the time. "From this date onwards, up to the date of my departure on 17th October, the flow of munitions and drafts fell away." The great offensive in France was being prepared and carried out. "Sickness, the legacy of a desperately trying summer, took heavy toll of the survivors of so many arduous conflicts." On 11th October Lord Kitchener cabled asking General Hamilton for an estimate of the losses which would be involved in an evacuation of the peninsula. On 12th October the Commander-in-Chief replied in terms showing that such a step was to him unthinkable. Four days later, he was recalled to London, where he was told by Lord Kitchener that the Government desired a fresh, unbiassed opinion from a responsible commander upon the question of an early evacuation. General Hamilton had indeed failed, though he had come within sight of success; and the new campaign of Germany against Servia had changed the outlook in the Balkans.

### XVII. THE BALKAN QUESTION.

IN the spring of 1915 the Balkan question began to assume an urgency which had its effect in several directions. The spring offensive against Russia was, no doubt, partly motivated by the political effects a series of successes would have upon Italy and the Balkans. But Italy and the Balkans, though they were frequently considered together, were really not very intimately connected. The future of the Adriatic, no doubt, depended upon some *rapprochement* between the interests of Italy and the Balkan group; but there the connection ended. The Central Powers stood to gain much from the accession to their cause of Italy. France, taken in the rear, would have had a task of such magnitude thrust upon her, that the Allies would have been hard pressed to maintain their hold in the north. At any rate, the Central Powers would have been considerably relieved both on land and at sea. The accession to their cause of the Balkan Powers, however, would have done little to assist the Germanic alliance, except in so far as it might have strengthened the Turkish resistance by giving Germany access to Turkey and by swelling the latter's stock of guns and ammunition. Still the accession of Italy and the neutrality of the Balkan group would have suited Germany very well.

On the other hand, the accession of Italy and the Balkan Powers to the Allied cause meant a very considerable help. Austria would be immediately taken in the rear by the nation whom she had traditionally maltreated and thwarted; and, if Rumania and Bulgaria joined with Servia and Greece, they could have made the position of Austria-Hungary critical. Moreover, the future of all these Powers lay in the hands of the Allies, and not in those of the Dual Alliance. One of the hopes with which Turkey had entered the war was the recovery of at least part of the territory she had lost in the Balkan War. If the Central Powers were to be successful, it is true, they might compensate Bulgaria and Greece at the expense of Servia, and Rumania at the expense of Russia. But Turkey would require some part of the booty, and it is improbable that Austria would be content unless she repaid herself from Servia for her sacrifices. On the other hand, the Bukovina and Transylvania, both Rumanian territories by dominant nationality, would be at the disposal of the

Allies in case of their success. Bosnia and Hertzegovina, Serb countries, would also be in the Allied gift, as well as the coast of Asia Minor, inhabited by Greeks ; and, in view of such compensations, Rumania might reasonably cede her Bulgar territory to Bulgaria, and Servia the part of Bulgar Macedonia which she secured in the second Balkan War. There could hardly be any comparison of the chances, even if one were to accept as of real value the promises backed by Germany.

Yet, although national aspirations all seemed to point in one direction, the diplomacy of the Allies failed to bring harmony to the conflicting plans of the Balkan Powers. There were positive factors against the adherence of the Balkan group. The Court party in Greece was strongly pro-German. The King's wife was the sister of the German Emperor, and King Constantine had even recently shown himself to be unduly impressed by the German army. Some thoughtless utterances before the war had needed a good deal of judicious explanation. The Rumanian Court party similarly had pronounced German tendencies, though they were less potent and violent since the death of the old king, who had attributed the Treaty of Bukharest to the German Emperor's help in a melodramatic telegram. The Tsar of Bulgaria, also, looked rather to the Central Powers than to Russia and the Allies. Yet the Balkan League had welded together Servia, Bulgaria, and Greece before ; and if its disruption had not occurred, it is difficult to see how Turkey could have joined the Central Powers. The reconstruction of the Balkan League would have seemed to any intelligent outsider to have been a work of prime and immediate importance. Yet the fact was that the Allies had no common Balkan policy, and the destinies of the Near East were left to the chance of the Balkan Ministers seeing clearly where their interests lay, and being powerful enough to carry their countries with them in spite of all obstacles. The Allied diplomacy was stamped by that evil genius of parliamentary government, procrastination. The situation was delicate in many ways, since Bulgaria's grievances could hardly be removed unless Servia were to sacrifice some of her territory ; and at the end of the first Balkan War she had shown herself ready to go through another campaign rather than consent to the surrender. Unless the Balkan States could have their demands satisfied, it was clear that they would not enter into the conflict. With the example of Belgium before them, how could they have been expected to do so ? Their military and financial resources were not such that they could stand a long campaign. Moreover, at the beginning of the war the General Staffs of the Balkan Powers, composed of soldiers chiefly trained in Germany, on German lines, felt convinced of the victory of the Germans. Bribery and threats from Germany were meant to keep the sentiment on the side of the Central Powers. But the belief in German victory went through some strange vicissitudes, and in spring it became a question of compensations.

Servia seemed at first to be the main obstacle to an agreement. As the price of her intervention Bulgaria demanded what was, ethnologically, her part of Macedonia. This was a demand in every way in keeping with the general aims of the Allies, and their representatives should have insisted upon some real attempt to consider the problem. The Russian Minister at Sofia was at first the intermediary for the negotiations, but through a lack of firmness they slipped from his hands, and the two States were left to negotiate directly. This was a blunder of the first magnitude, since the effect was, as might have been expected, that Bulgaria asked for a large area, and Servia was not disposed to grant more than part of it. As Servia, in the event of the Allies' success, stood to gain a very large and most important



territory, her action seems to have been unreasonable. But it is difficult to surrender territory which has been won at the expenditure of a great outpouring of blood ; and that was Servia's excuse at last, as it had been at first, for going back in 1913 on the Annexe to the Treaty of Alliance in February 1912, which defined the Bulgarian and Servian territories. Servia's case was that she had agreed to the Annexe only on condition that Bulgaria should help her to gain the territories which should accrue to her, whereas she herself not only took all she held unaided, but had to assist the Bulgarians in Thrace. As the Allies were so intimately concerned in gaining for Servia the territories which she hoped to possess after the war, it seems incredible that more pressure should not have been brought to bear upon her to make concessions to Bulgaria. The latter claimed Macedonia right up to the Grecian and Albanian boundaries ; Servia would agree to cede only the eastern districts about Ishtip and Radovisto. Servia and Bulgaria, at the end of 1914, were therefore at a deadlock, and this fact conditioned the action of Greece and Rumania, neither of whom felt safe to move if Bulgaria had not been bribed either to remain neutral or to assist.

But, for themselves, Rumania and Greece behaved with more statesmanship. The most eminent statesman in the Balkans, Venizelos, the Grecian Prime Minister, showed a firmness of grip that those who knew him best ever expected, but that plainly disconcerted his own king and part of his fellow-countrymen. It was Venizelos to whom chiefly was due the Balkan Alliance, which had achieved such success in the Balkan War. The task of reconciling so many conflicting interests among peoples whose passions never slumber deeply or very long was one of the greatest delicacy—much more difficult, probably, than that of reconstructing the Alliance in 1914. Yet Venizelos succeeded, and not by any small diplomatic triumph, but by the true intuition of statesmanship. He had mastered the difficult art of giving way. He saw clearly and appreciated fully that in the midst of a number of conflicting interests none could be completely satisfied, and he was strong enough and bold enough to be ready to sacrifice an immediate and tangible advantage for the sake of larger chances in the future. At the beginning of the war the Kaiser, who had studiously courted his brother-in-law on his visit to Germany, attempted to gain over Greece to his cause, but without success. The political insight of Venizelos was sufficiently true to see that little, if any, advantage was to be gained from the Germanic Powers. Yet, in October, Greece informed the Powers that she was about to occupy Epirus, in order to preserve order, and no objection was made. The Grecians had every desire to secure advantages without taking appreciable risks. The Bulgarian menace seemed somewhat relieved about Christmas time, when Rumania warned Austria that if she made another serious attack upon Servia she could not remain neutral. This undoubtedly tended to reassure Greece, yet not wholly. For, although Bulgaria alone could hardly jeopardise the Grecian possessions, if Rumania as well as Servia were enrolled on the side of the Allies, Bulgaria with Turkey might still make a determined bid to recover their lost territory.

So matters stood at the beginning of the new year. The Allies were still bringing no decided pressure to bear. Venizelos had so far remained obdurate, and, although Servia's refusal of Bulgaria's claims was the essential obstacle to a Balkan Entente, Greece was even more obstructionist, and more reasonably so. But when about mid-January the Entente Powers offered Greece the chance of a new and great Empire in Asia Minor, Venizelos at once advised intervention, and was

willing to make a serious bid for Bulgarian favour. He suggested even the cession of the most important seaport, Kavalla, in order to secure the assurance of her support. But the mere suggestion of the cession of Kavalla aroused so great an outcry that the project had to be dropped. Yet it was a statesmanlike suggestion, and it was only suggested as the price of gains so large that it is extraordinary there should have been any objection to the bargain. Naturally, the news of the projected cession of part of Macedonia only leaked out later, when Venizelos had abandoned the idea of intervention for the time, owing to opposition in the council; and when it did leak out, the exact terms upon which the territory would have been handed over were not known. In his account of the situation, Venizelos made it clear that, as a compensation for the surrender of 2,000 square kilometres, he expected (1) 1,000 square kilometres in Northern Macedonia, in a district of strategic importance to the Greek frontier, (2) the alliance of Bulgaria, (3) sovereign possession of about 140,000 square kilometres in Western Asia Minor. And the cession was only to take place after the war, when the terms of clause 3 were seen to be fulfilled. This seems to have been a speculation more than usually secured, but it was found to be unpalatable to the Greeks.

In the middle of February, when the naval attack upon the Dardanelles was opened, Greece was asked about her intentions. Venizelos proposed to send some 50,000 men against Turkey. This was opposed by the military authorities on the ground that Bulgaria might interfere. The dimensions of the proposed expedition were reduced, but to no avail, and on 6th March Venizelos resigned. His policy had split on many rocks. There was the fear of Bulgaria, the fear that the Asia Minor territory when ceded might prove too difficult to hold against the Turks. Venizelos pleaded in vain that, once established in Asia Minor, Greece would have the Allies for her neighbours and the British fleet at her doors. There was the Court opposition and German intrigue against him; and the commitments of Greece to Servia acted as a restraint.

Rumania, meanwhile, was grappling with her own difficulties. She was willing to cede to Bulgaria the territory she had seized by the Treaty of Bukharest, and towards the end of the year there were numerous rumours of Rumanian intervention. These arose from a variety of causes. There were pronouncements by ex-Ministers which lacked nothing in definiteness as to the fact of intervention; the time alone was not stated. In the new year the Bank of England lent Rumania £5,000,000. This seemed to seal her adherence to the cause of the Allies; and it was freely stated that Rumania and Italy had come to an agreement as to the nature and time of their intervention. The Russian movement in the Bukovina in the beginning of the year seemed to be a direct preparation for a junction with Rumania, who was to seize the Rumanian province of Transylvania. But Austria made a counter-move against Russia, as well as counter-offers, and the Rumanian situation took on a new orientation. The chief causes of the change were, oddly, fear of Russian power and fear of her impotence. Impotent she would leave Rumania to stand alone against any force which Austria might choose to fling against her; powerful she might close the Black Sea when Constantinople and the Dardanelles had passed into her hands. The Rumanians had to balance their grievances as to the occupation of Bessarabia by Russia and the occupation of Transylvania by Austria, though, as we have already suggested, the question of which was the more valuable territory to them was hardly possible to dispute. And at the back always was the fear of Bulgaria.



During the spring and summer of 1915 the prospects of a reconstruction of the Balkan League grew steadily fairer in spite of the efforts of the Germanic Allies to cloud the political and moral atmosphere. At the beginning of May Germany began her extraordinary offensive against Russia under which the Russian forces seemed at first to reel. To the few possessed of a strong military sense the Russian retreat was one of the most extraordinary achievements of history. Her serious shortage of equipment made it the worst of policies to risk a general engagement, and the masterly handling of troops by which Russia extricated herself time after time from the most critical positions, after extracting every ounce of advantage from her opponent, showed that even if Germany were great Russia was truly formidable. Still, in the crucial result, Russia would be unable to help the Balkans in any offensive for some time, and if the Balkan group took the field they would do so against serious threats. When the Germans had pressed back the Russians to the Dniester and San, and were even across the San, on 24th May Italy declared war, and this had its effect upon the Near East. There was no immediate result, but as the summer drew on Serbia settled down to the serious consideration of the question of Bulgarian compensations. At this time there began to circulate rumours of an agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey. The actual course of the negotiations is not yet known, but Turkey was announced to have ceded certain rights over the frontier railway to Bulgaria, and it seemed that the latter was definitely committed to siding with the Central Powers. An announcement was made that no such inference was to be drawn from the fact of any arrangement with Turkey. The fact is that Bulgaria signed a treaty with Germany on 17th July.

During August 1915 new rumours began to find a circulation. It was now reported that Bulgaria and Turkey had failed to agree. Whatever may have been the cause and course of the negotiations, the Powers of the Quadruple Entente began to bring joint pressure on the Balkan States to secure the reconstruction of the Alliance of 1912, and about mid-August the Germanic Powers began to make threats against Bulgaria. As we have seen, the matter was already settled, and all the threats of Radoslavov, the Premier, and the hectoring of Germany were merely to tide over the short period which must elapse before the Central Powers could be ready for their campaign in Serbia.

The Central Powers were then at the zenith of their success. They had pushed back Russia out of Galicia past the line of the Bug, had taken Warsaw, Ivangorod, Novo Georgievsk, Kovno, and Brest. Still the advantages were not wholly on their side, and the Balkan Powers were not wholly deceived. New efforts were being made in the Dardanelles, and although the advance was slow, it was threatening. British submarines had created and maintained a reign of terror in the Sea of Marmora. In effect they established a blockade of Gallipoli. It was difficult to reinforce the troops, and the supplies of ammunition began to give anxiety. Germany tried to send new stores through Rumania, but this country refused to allow them to go through. This represented a striking change, since one of the reasons why Rumania had been reluctant to join the Allies earlier was the pro-German tendencies of the commercial elements in Rumania. That these were now refusing the advantages of trade with the Central Powers was very significant. As early as 16th July the Central Powers demanded transit for supplies to Turkey, and Rumania absolutely refused. No threat could prevail upon her to give way; and even when a German army corps was sent ostentatiously to Orsova, the point where the Aus-

trian, Servian, and Rumanian frontiers meet, there was no sign of acquiescence. Germany then began to moot a plan for attacking Servia through Bulgaria. It was hoped by this to force Bulgaria's hand. In case she refused, the threat, in unambiguous terms, was to create another Belgium. Even this produced no immediate effect. Bulgaria no doubt felt that, as Venizelos had said when urging Greece to join the cause of the Allies even without a previous *rapprochement* with Bulgaria, "in the event of the victory of the Triple Entente she would have risked losing even what she now possesses."

The Greek elections had resulted in a pronounced majority in favour of Venizelos, and in the last week of August King Constantine was unable to keep the eminent Minister out of office, and he entrusted him with the formation of a Cabinet. Servia was considering in secret session the question of Bulgaria's claim to Macedonia. New pressure was being brought to bear upon her and the other Powers of the Balkan group to come to an agreement. They were still disposed to delay, but towards the end of August Italy declared war against Turkey. She had previously sent an Italian military representative to Gallipoli, presumably to concert a new attack upon the Turks. Further landings of British troops had taken place, and the Allied lines were threatening to envelop the Turkish positions.

But in September the Allies were seen to have lost the Gallipoli campaign, and the result in the Balkans was considerable. Russia had been compelled to fall back to Pinsk. Vilna had fallen, and the Germans were preparing for a Balkan campaign. The Allies' chance had gone, and Bulgaria only waited for the destined hour to strike.

### XVIII. THE FALL OF VILNA.

THE defence of Brest was one of the most heroic events in the history of the war, and the series of manœuvres and battles constituting the withdrawal from Warsaw and Brest, of which it formed a part, was one of the most masterly operations in military history. The Russians were now settling down to a new phase with new energy and new blood to command. Alexeieff, who had extricated the Russian armies from the deadly attempts to envelop them made by superior forces superiorly armed, was now about to assume supreme command. The Tsar went to the front to take command of his forces, but he made as his Chief of Staff Alexeieff. The Grand Duke, who had thus far played so masterly a game for the defence of Russia, was sent to take supreme administrative and military command of the Caucasus. He took with him his Chief of Staff, Yanuskevitch, who, though an inexperienced soldier, had had sufficient common sense to follow the suggestions of the Quarter-master-General, Daniloff. Evert succeeded Alexeieff in command of the western group.

The invasion of Russia had produced an upheaval in the country, and Russians of almost all classes were crying for a representative and responsible Ministry. New life was stirring, and the Grand Duke was reputed the head and mainstay of the old conservative regime. His supersession was, therefore, political rather than military, and its justification lay in the suspicion that, if the Russian army won through under his command, it would be taken as a triumph of the old regime. Its result was to give an undoubtedly brilliant mind to the direction of Russia's forces. Alexeieff



was described as "the keenest mind in the Russian army." He had already seen the army through several crises. He was about to steer it through the severest of all, and he succeeded by his characteristic inability to trust wholly to subordinates. Ruzsky had already returned to the army to match his subtle brain and experience against that of Below and Eichhorn for the possession of Petrograd; and in a little time there emerged as the Russian main commanders the well-tried three—Ruzsky on the Riga-Kovno section, Evert on the section above the Pripet Marshes, and the undaunted Ivanov south of the Pripet.

Ruzsky had by this time been compelled to fall back by the capture of Kovno. Evert, who was in command of the army operating on the Niemen front, had been in difficulties, since the fall of Kovno obliged both him and Ruzsky on his right to readjust their line. But though there was considerable pressure upon Evert's left, he still held out on the Niemen. His stand there was, of course, part of the scheme for holding off the advance against the Brest forces by the German forces north of Warsaw. The important railway junction Bialystok, in which five lines centred, was held until a few days before Brest itself fell. But the retreat from that town was so orderly and vigorous that the German armies were able to make little headway to the north. It might have seemed that it gave a leverage to break up the remnant of the Niemen line which still held out. But Grodno, the Niemen fortress next to the north, was held by the Russians longer than the small and out-of-date fortress between it and Kovno. Olita was evacuated on the day after the fall of Brest. It was a full week before Grodno was in German hands.

But with the fall of Grodno Evert's armies were in a bad position. They had held advanced positions in order to fend off the pursuit from Alexeieff's armies farther south. But with the fall of Brest the German armies were far east of Grodno, and they attempted after Kovno to press farther east still. The general effect of the movements was to put Evert's force under threat of envelopment from north and south. His positions formed indeed another salient, and gave the German Staff yet another chance to redeem its dreams by cutting across the neck and surrounding the armies within. The situation immediately after the fall of Grodno was such that a rashly valorous action had to be undertaken to relieve the pressure of the retreat. The Germans only claimed to have taken 400 prisoners—a fact sufficiently indicative of the coolness of the Russian withdrawal. But on 3rd September, the day after the fortress had been taken, Evert found that his troops to the south were still under some danger of being cut off, and he sent a small force back into the town to gain a little time for the sorely tried troops. The Russians actually fought the Germans back into the streets of Grodno and took some 150 prisoners and 8 machine guns.

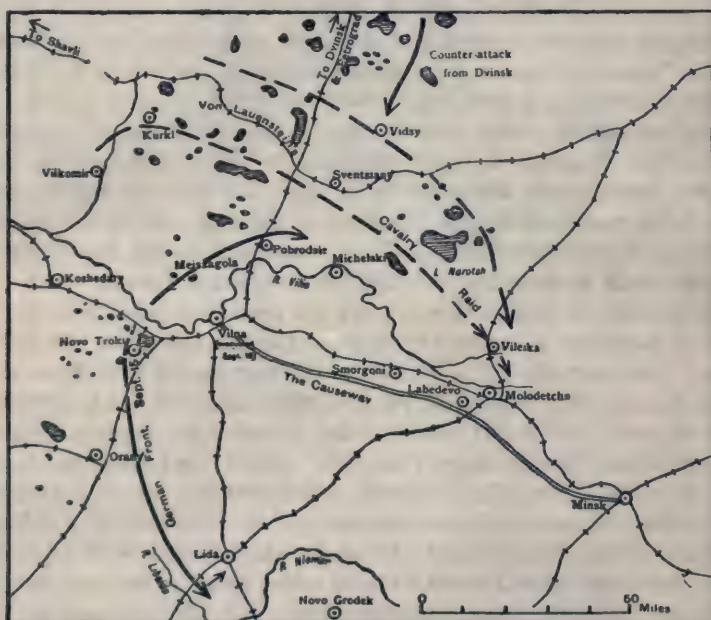
The Germans now attempted to force their way to Lida, a railway junction below Vilna and midway between Grodno and Olita towards the east. This blow, if effective, would have broken the Russian line, and left the enemy established between the armies north of the Pripet and the Vilna group. The attempt was foiled, and the Russian line still rested on the Niemen at Meretch, and thence stretched south and east through Skidel to the town of Chemska in the Pripet Marshes.

**Meiszagola.**—Such was the position at the end of the first week in September. It was at this time that the Tsar issued his proclamation announcing that he was undertaking the supreme command of the army and navy. A few days later a new and important movement was initiated by the forcing of the river Sventa below

Vilkomir, with the main thrust directed towards the junction Sventsiany. There was clearly an important operation in process against the 10th Army, which lay about Vilna, and was expected by Ruszky to fall back towards the north-east to join his northern group.

Another force was attempting to march upon Vilna from Meiszagola, which lies less than twenty miles to the north-west. This force was near enough to threaten Vilna directly, whereas the advance towards Sventsiany threatened to cut Vilna off entirely. The advance from the direction of Meretch towards Lida was at the same time pressed with greater vigour than ever.

The position of Vilna could not now be disguised. The Germans were again attempting to create and cut off a salient. Vilna lay at the junction of a number of important railways. Its railway communications gave ready access to Dvinsk and



The Retreat from Vilna.

Petrograd, to Rovno, to Warsaw, to Minsk, to Kovno and Königsberg, to Libau. On the west it was cut off completely by the German advance. On the east it had still three avenues at its disposal for supply or, in case of necessity, retreat. The northern railway line to Petrograd running through Sventsiany lay open to attack, but was not yet cut; to the south its communication with the Pripet ran through Lida, and this was also directly threatened though still available. Only one line, that connecting it with Minsk, was quite free; but it was realised that if the Germans could cut the line at Lida or Sventsiany, and press north or south respectively, even this avenue of escape might be closed to them.

At Meiszagola a fierce and prolonged struggle took place. The Russian line lay at the opening of the battle on the low hills (Hill 159) north-west of the town, and the position commanding Vilna and its neighbourhood was held by the Imperial Guard. Litzmann's artillery was brought up from Kovno, and the hill was stormed; but



the Guard still obstinately stood in advance of Meiszagola and delivered furious counter-attacks. On the 8th Novo Troki, a village standing on the causeway between the lakes west of Vilna, was carried. Vilna was now closely beset, and four days later, under cover of a heavy bombardment, the Germans cut through the Guard and took Meiszagola, forcing the Russians to fall back on Vilna.

On 13th September the railway line between Vilna and Dvinsk was cut near Pobrodsie, and it soon became apparent that all other attempts at envelopment were to be surpassed by the tactics in this direction. Hindenburg put into operation a plan in which we can see at its best Ludendorff's genius for detail. The operations which began with the cutting of the northern line of retreat constituted a movement most delicately balanced and daringly conceived for the capture of the whole of the troops in the Vilna salient. The basis of this attack was to be a large force of cavalry who could move down with the greatest speed and cut the railway in the rear of the Vilna troops, and thus block the one remaining line of retreat. A force of some 40,000 German and Austrian cavalry, under General von Schmettau, was concentrated north of Kovno, and was sent against this section of the railway line which formed the northern line of retreat. It cut the line, as we have seen, at Pobrodsie and Sventsiany, and swept east and south-east in a vast sweeping movement on to the line at Molodetchno, a junction between Vilna and Minsk, and nearer the latter. It had reached Molodetchno on the 16th, three days after the railway had been cut at Sventsiany. The distance covered in these three days was sufficient to make clear what sort of force was operating in this direction. It was said at the time that there was behind the cavalry a large concentration of infantry, but the rate of movement precluded the idea of any large force of infantry being involved. There was undoubtedly some infantry, and it is now known that they were conveyed in motor wagons. The effect of these fragmentary announcements upon the sympathetic Allies can hardly be exaggerated. From a distance, it looked as if the Germans had at length succeeded in their main strategy, and that a complete and first-rate Russian army was certainly about to be enveloped. At the same time the armies from the south were fighting their way across the Shara (a tributary of the Niemen) towards the junction of Baranovitchi, which was the direct way of approach to Minsk, and were pressing on towards Lida.

During the following days the Russian position became more critical still, and it was some time before it was known whether the 10th Army had evaded the enveloping Germans. On the 18th Vilna was evacuated, and the troops began to fall back. On the 20th the main German infantry had reached a front which lay parallel to the Vilna-Dvinsk railway, but to the east. Two days later the Germans were east of Lida, and had almost reached Baranovitchi. By cutting the northern line at Sventsiany the Germans had cut off the line of retreat to the north; by seizing Lida they had stopped the southern avenue of escape, and they were posted at Molodetchno on the central line. Thus it looked as if the armies within the salient were to be either annihilated or captured. The German lines drew tighter. The cavalry and small bodies of infantry descended upon the essential railway at Soly, a station midway between Vilna and Molodetchno. The infantry towards the south were massed as far north as Biniakony, which is about the same distance from Vilna as Soly. To the north their only bulwark against the Germans was the little river Vilia. In the rough semicircle which it makes upon the Vilna-Molodetchno line only they had manœuvring room.

The escape from this trap sheds the greatest credit upon Alexeieff. Ruzsky suddenly struck with a heavy force of cavalry in the rear of the Germans at Vidzy, a town midway between Dvinsk and Vilna. At the same time Alexeieff began to change the line of retirement of the 10th Army, moving the constituents brigade by brigade due east along the left bank of the Vilja. The cavalry made a swift attack upon the Germans, who were established at Vileika, on the upper waters of the Vilja. The Germans, taken by surprise, were easily dislodged from the town, and by the advance of the Russians eastwards the Germans at Soly were compelled to fall back from the railway. Thus the narrow neck through which the Germans had intended they should retreat was widened at once, and the unexpected line of retreat upset the German plans. They had naturally expected that, knowing that the Germans were in their rear, the Russians would attempt to fall back in a south-easterly direction, when von Eichhorn and von Scholtz would have fallen upon them at the same time that they came under attack from the north and west.

The gap once widened was easily kept open until the troops within the salient were withdrawn to safety. Vilna was abandoned, but no significant number of prisoners was taken. The Germans were able to extend their hold upon the railway down to and including the junction of Baranovitchi. Little by little the Russian line in this quarter was straightened out and made more easily defensible.

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Meanwhile, significant operations had been taking place both to the north and to the south. The Germans, preparing a *coup* about Vilna, were determined to distract attention from their operations; and the Russians were equally pleased to engage upon other sections of the front, since, owing to the fall of Brest, the army groups were not so able to reinforce each other as were the German armies.

After the attempt to turn the line of the Dvina by a landing in the Gulf of Riga there began a long struggle for the possession of the river, which was the first line of defence of Riga. Below, at first in charge here, attacked the three bridgeheads at Lennewaden, Friedrichstadt, and Jacobstadt. But the Russians, who had fallen back across the river, destroyed the bridges and began the skilful and stubborn defence which kept the Germans from making any material headway, and was a preparation for several tactical advances later on. Jacobstadt and Friedrichstadt were both taken by the Germans, and towards the end of October they succeeded in pushing their advance to Illukst for a week or two. But, on the other hand, Ruzsky about that time had been able to press back the German line on the west of Riga. The effect of this secure hold of the line of the Dvina was to withhold from the Germans the Riga-Dvinsk section of the railway line, which became their new dream when the last attempt to take part of the Russian armies had failed at Vilna.

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Farther south, however, more significant operations were taking place. We have seen that the fall of Brest interposed a section of practically impassable marsh-land between the Russian armies to the north and to the south. This had the effect of cutting off all but the most indirect communications between the northern and southern armies. It might happen that an army was outnumbered and hard pressed, but it could not receive any speedy aid from another. The long railway which ran along the Russian front was no longer wholly in their hands, and the consequence was that the army groups had to be munitioned separately, and might, therefore, represent for some little time varying degrees of effective force.



This may have been the reason why Ivanoff's group of armies was so successful at the very time that Evert was in a critical position and Ruszky was hard pressed to defend the line of the Dvina. Kovel was taken on 23rd August by General Puhallo, and the Austrian advance was continued eastwards. His object was to turn the heart of Ivanoff's position—the strong triangle of fortresses known as the Volhynian triangle: Lutsk, Dubno, and Rovno. Unless the three could be taken, the southern section of the railway upon which the Germans had now set their minds could not be captured. Rovno was the important link which would connect the northern armies with the Lemberg bases. At the same time that his left wing was thus trying to force its way north of the position his right was advancing to its westernmost bastion—Lutsk. Farther south, Boehm Ermolli's troops were advancing eastwards, and Ivanoff withdrew in face of them towards Brody. On 29th August the Austrians entered the important town Zlochoff, which lies on the branch railway line to Tarnopol. Still farther to the south General Bothmer took Brzezany and pressed eastward. On his right General Pflanzer was directing his armies upon Buczacz. He already held Zaleschchykl. The Russian line, therefore, rested at its southernmost point upon the Bessarabian frontier.

These movements all had their meaning in the attack upon the triangle of fortresses. Boehm Ermolli was advancing against it by way of Dubno, which guarded the approach to Rovno from Lemberg, and Puhallo was approaching it from the north-west by way of Lutsk, which guarded the road from Kovel. From 29th to 31st August a fierce battle raged in front of Brody. On the first day there were seven separate attempts to capture the eminence which commands the southern part of the battle front at Bialy kamien. Brody fell on 1st September, but it was given up owing to a real reverse which had befallen the Russians farther north. On the last day of August Puhallo's troops entered Lutsk; and the Russians, withdrawing at that point, had also to withdraw farther south. In the extreme south the Russian line was readjusted to the course of the Sereth after a short rearguard stand on the Strypa. The retirement was really strategic—that is to say, it was undertaken under no immediate compulsion, and, in fact, the Russians captured some 10,000 men in their withdrawal.

With the entry into Brody and the capture of Lutsk, it was evident that the position of Dubno had become critical. The Austrians were able to enter that fortress on 7th September, but were hardly installed when a heavy counter-attack was launched by the Russians from the direction of Tarnopol. This centre was directly threatened by the advance, as was also the third of the fortresses, Rovno. But Tarnopol being connected directly with the Russian bases, and being yet in Austrian territory, exercised a more profound fascination upon Ivanoff. The German stroke in Galicia was largely political. The Servian campaign was preparing. If a really great clearing up of the Galician situation could be effected, then possibly Rumania, as well as Bulgaria, would join the Germans, and the Serb campaign would be a promenade. Ivanoff accumulated a large amount of the heavy artillery which had been flowing into Russia recently, and began to pay the Germans back in their own coin. The Russians struck in the very quarter where they were most threatened—Brussiloff from Tarnopol and Letchitsky from Trembovla on the Sereth. On the night of 7th September the Russian attack began, and it was carried through with such fierceness that the Austrians and Germans were driven back with great slaughter, leaving over 200 officers and 8,000 men in the hands of the Russians,

besides a number of heavy guns and machine guns. At Trembovla the Russians were similarly successful, taking 150 officers and 7,000 men prisoners, with a number of guns, and driving the enemy in haste towards the Strypa. The battle was continued on 9th September, and another 5,000 prisoners were taken. The offensive extended to the north, and Lutsk was retaken (23rd) for a space, though it was not retained. But such was the impetuosity of the Russian attack that the Austrians were put to flight, and so completely routed that the war material captured grew day by day. In the first week of the offensive the number of prisoners taken was equal to a complete army corps, and there were besides 14 siege guns and over 70 machine guns. In the following week, when the fighting had extended northwards, the number of prisoners had risen to 80,000, and there were more guns.

During the whole of September the Russians captured 100,000 men. Even in this greatest of wars that was a great number, and its real significance is only appreciated when it is remembered that the number of prisoners averages, on the whole, the number of dead, and that the two together only form about 40 per cent.\* of the total casualties of the battles in which these casualties occurred. This would make a total loss from the firing line of half a million men, though, of course, a large percentage would sooner or later return.

But by this time the centre of interest had moved elsewhere. The campaign of 1915 against Russia really ended with the escape of the Vilna troops. In all military history there is no greater campaign recorded for the numbers engaged, the losses sustained, the extent of the front of manœuvre, the persistence of the offensive, and the distances traversed. There is no need to imagine that the plan sprung, fully developed, from Ludendorff's or Falkenhayn's brain. There is direct evidence to the contrary, evidence that the Germans expected what never occurred—a real breakdown in the Russian army. The plan grew; and if we must admire the capacity and genius and versatility of the German command, it is evident we must pay much higher tribute to the skill and coolness and courage of the Russian command, who, ever doomed to fight with an extraordinary inferiority of equipment, were able to hold, after the first surprise, as long as was necessary to escape disaster. "The strain on our troops," says Ludendorff, "was tremendous. Clothing and boots were in rags and tatters. Supply was difficult. It was almost impossible to find billets, as the Russians systematically destroyed or burned stores and villages. . . . The supply and transport conditions became more unfavourable from day to day." †. . . The Russians exacted their price for withdrawal, and if they lost heavily and made the Austrians pay the greater part of the bill, the purposes of the war were still served, since the weight fell more and more upon the Germans.

## XIX. THE FIRST PEACE OFFER.

AFTER the fall of Warsaw Germany was in so commanding a position that she thought the time had come to attempt to make peace with Russia. Her armies at the moment threatened to bring off a spectacular *coup* by the capture of the troops

\* This proportion is only true as an average, and in this fighting it can hardly have been an accurate gauge of the relative losses. The Austrians persistently lost heavily in prisoners on the Eastern front.

† *My Memories*, p. 152.



which Alexeieff was withdrawing from the salient about the Polish capital. Her chances to an impartial observer must have seemed high. It was obvious that Russia must fall back still more, and it would be fortunate for her if she did not lose a great part of her army.

Tentative offers were accordingly made through Denmark \* on 8th August. The German Staff realised before the war that unless they could take France and Russia in detail, and dispose of them one at a time, they had no chance of a decisive victory. It was necessary to write off one of her enemies at a time, and the moment seemed to favour a bargain with Russia. There was another reason for the peace offer. In this war waged before the modern world, which is conscious almost to its remotest extremities of every action in every part, the good opinion of those nations and states not directly involved in the war is a considerable asset. If Germany could persuade neutrals that the Allies were holding out against fair offers of peace, and were bent upon annihilating their enemy, a number of desirable results might follow. The United States, for instance, might refuse to supply munitions to the Allies any longer, and might bring financial pressure to bear upon them. At the very least, their friendship and that of other neutrals might be of considerable value to the Germans at the Congress of Peace, and would certainly be valuable when the time came to attempt the rebuilding of the normal life of the nation, which had been so severely interrupted by the war.

The precise facts of the peace offer are not yet known, but it is fairly clear that the Kaiser offered peace on fair terms. The nature of these terms throws a strange sidelight upon the relations of Germany and her ally. Germany is said to have offered Russia Galicia and the Dardanelles in exchange for the western part of Poland. There are several instructive points about this bargain. Germany by it would emerge from the war the gainer, and Russia not the loser. Germany would have a decided increase of territory to show for her tremendous sacrifices, and Russia would have, what she so much desired, an outlet in all seasons on the sea, and a highly organised and successfully administered province in exchange for the loosely organised district of Western Poland. The definitive limitation of these areas might have been so arranged that both Germany and Russia gained even more. Russia, for instance, might have gained a natural boundary both west and south, and Germany would have been rid of the obnoxious Russian salient. The terms, therefore, had much to commend them, but they had several features which foredoomed them to rejection.

They took no account of national psychology. How was Russia likely to give up her territory at the point of the sword, even when the surrender represented upon the whole an advantageous bargain? And, further, if the Allies were to win ultimately, Russia would secure all that Germany offered, and would have recovered her prestige by forcing the Germans to evacuate Poland. The history of Russia bears sufficient proof on every page that, once the national spirit is aroused, it will go to extreme lengths until its honour is satisfied. And, again, the Russians were hardly likely to forget the agreement they had so lately signed to make peace only jointly with their Allies. To consider the conditions more cynically, Russia might have been forgiven, reflecting that neither Galicia nor the Dardanelles was now in her hands.

\* Statsraad Andersen seems to have been the intermediary—an odd rôle for so great a "friend" of England.

The conditions, then, were very shrewdly conceived, but the offer was at once brushed aside. Under the circumstances, it is natural that Germany should deny having made any offer. The interesting feature about the denial is that it only appeared after the report of the offer had been made public for about two days. It therefore served the purpose of a *ballon d'essai*, to show how the wind lay. That, indeed, was its subsidiary end. The Germans knew that, even if their offer were to be refused, it would at least show the state of feeling among the Allied nations; and it might even serve to strengthen whatever forces were working for peace by suggesting that, in face of a fair offer, the continuance of the war was wanton. It is probable that the dark forces in Russia, which were inclined to view Germany with much less disfavour than the bulk of the people, drew strength from the offer, and to this extent it served its purpose.

But the offer through Denmark was not the only means by which Germany tried to throw the odium for continuing the war upon the Allies. On 6th August there appeared in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courante*, a leading Dutch journal, though of pro-German tendencies, an article ("from a diplomatic source"), which, with an appearance of frankness and dispassionateness, discussed the whole problem of the war. But it hardly needed a careful examination to show how cleverly the article was weighted in the German favour.

It opened by deprecating the wild statements on both sides. It was stated that the Allies had boasted that peace would not be decided until the Gurkhas were in Berlin. This was untrue, but it was balanced against the statement from the German side. The suggestion was that there was a great deal of wild talk on both sides; but it carefully ignored the fact that the boast about the German submarines was made by Tirpitz. All the bluff had come from the German side. The Allies had been studiously moderate in their statements; yet the article was appealing to a public which could hardly know this. After a poisonous suggestion of this kind, with its specious air of open-mindedness and moderation, the article proceeded to its chief point—the conclusion that "it is impossible to reach a decision on the battlefield."

Such a statement, with its astounding contrast to the usual German boastfulness, issued at a time when, as the author said, "the prospects of the Central Powers are, it is true, better than ever before," could only be very arresting. This strain was elaborated to some extent as an introduction to the suggestion that the only results really feasible were "the basis that the victors will not annex peoples of a race and language different from their own," though there would have to be taken into account "the results achieved on the battlefield." The apparent conflict of such a condition and the previous statement was brushed aside with a graceful hint about compensations outside of Europe. Germany was to make terms then as a victor, and to be bought off the alien territory she occupied by British and French colonies; yet the article was so cleverly written that, to neutral eyes, it must have seemed a fair statement of conditions and, if anything, a magnanimous offer of peace. The one false step in the article was an attack upon Sir Edward Grey, who was painted as the one obstacle to "the fair dream of noble men"—disarmament. It seems incredible that any neutral could easily assimilate so glaring a calumny.

On the same day that the *Times* published a translation of this article there appeared in the announcements of the Wireless Press two telegrams circulated by the German Government. The first was one from the United Press Agency of the



United States to "the German Emperor, Warsaw, Poland," asking for a statement of the German basis of peace. The second was from the German Chancellor in place of the Emperor, who was unable to reply "for reasons of principle." He proceeded to state that the Kaiser had declared but a week previously that Germany was fighting for "such firm safeguards as she needs for a lasting peace and her national future." And the peace for which she was striving would "guarantee to all nationalities the freedom of the oceans" and "a free world-wide commerce." Such an explanation of the safeguards she required can hardly have been expected to appeal very strongly to neutral nations with the memory of the *Lusitania* and numerous similar crimes in their minds. But it was an obsession of the German mind that the United States, feeling the restrictions of naval interference, would especially appreciate the prospect of making any similar action impossible for the future. Sir Edward Grey pertinently pointed out later that "freedom of the sea may be a very reasonable subject for discussion, definition, and agreement between nations after this war; but not by itself alone, not while there is no freedom and no security against war and German methods of war on land."

There were, further, about this time appeals by the Pope and Roman Catholic dignitaries. The wording of the Pope's letter \* deserves to be recorded. "It is our firm determination to devote every activity to the reconciliation of the peoples now engaged in this fratricidal struggle. To-day, on the sad anniversary of the outbreak of this tremendous conflict, there issues from our heart an earnest prayer for the cessation of the war. It must not be said that this conflict cannot be settled without armed violence. Put away mutual desire for destruction and reflect that nations do not die; if humiliated and oppressed, they prepare to retaliate by transmitting from generation to generation hatred and the desire for revenge.

"Why should not a direct or indirect exchange of views be initiated in an endeavour, if possible, to arrange aspirations so that all should be contented? This is our cry for peace, and we invite all the friends of peace to unite with us in our desire to terminate this war and re-establish the empire of right, resolving henceforth to solve differences not by the sword, but by equity and justice. We impart our apostolic benediction also upon those not yet belonging to the Roman Church."

There was now really no reason whatever to think that the Pope or any one else was so politically stupid as to wish to force a peace on the basis of the state existing at that moment. Such an idea would be the admission of the justice and propriety of preparing aggression in times of peace by every means at a nation's command. For it was by this means alone that Germany found herself at the moment in possession of Warsaw and Western Poland, Belgium and the north of France. But uncritical observers and nervous people in the Allied and neutral nations were liable to realise more impressively from all these different peace suggestions the one main fact that it was the Allies who were against peace at the moment. Thus, when an Irish Roman Catholic bishop appealed to Mr. Redmond to help in furthering the cause of peace, Mr. Redmond could only reply that the moment was inopportune. In so far as Germany succeeded in obscuring the main issues—that she had fallen when fully prepared upon the Powers of the Entente, who were only prepared navally, and by so doing had seized and occupied a considerable portion of their territory—and suggested the isolated fact that the Allies were more reluctant to consider a cessation of hostilities, her efforts had at least achieved their secondary end.

\* Given by Reuter.

## BOOK II.

### THE FIRST ALLIED WESTERN OFFENSIVE.

#### I. THE ALLIED SUMMER OFFENSIVE: CHAMPAGNE, LOOS, THE ARTOIS.

"The Entente started a powerful offensive near Loos and in Champagne. The troops which had been transferred from the East arrived just in time to support the defenders of the Western front, who were holding out so gallantly, and avert a serious defeat." —Ludendorff, *My Memories*, p. 172.

WHEN Hindenburg was making his final attempt to deal the Russian army a crushing blow by enveloping the Vilna forces, the general atmosphere of the war had already changed. Warsaw fell at the beginning of August, and, the peace proposals being brushed aside, it seemed that fate had planned to point Russia's unreason in refusing to recognise her defeat. The Germans continued to advance. Fortress after fortress fell. At the end of the month even Brest, the centre of the Bug defences, had to be abandoned. It is idle to think that Russia suffered these blows to her pride willingly. These were indeed her blackest days; and as the retreat had already continued since the end of April, there seemed to the uninstructed observer no reason why it should not go on indefinitely. Russia still suffered, as indeed did the Allies equally, from their initial inferiority in equipment, though the balance was now somewhat improved; and it was difficult to visualise that wastage of Germany's resources which must put an end to the great campaign in the East and gradually produce the conditions that would ensure her defeat.

It was hard to see in the dull rumbling bombardment, which began in mid-August and gradually involved the whole of the Western front, any sufficient distraction from the painful preoccupation with the plight of the Russian forces about Vilna. And it was not until the end of September that it was known that Germany's bolt had been shot and Russia had emerged from the prolonged ordeal without having suffered a sufficiently disproportionate loss to enable Germany to continue the offensive against her any further. A position of equilibrium had been achieved. But before this was known the attention of the world was focussed upon a new area. The Allied offensive had begun, and its initial effects were so striking that all who sympathised with the Allies felt themselves justified in allowing their hopes free rein.

In the long run it is doubtful if operations not completely justified by military motives alone are of any real avail. Yet the September offensive was undertaken largely from political and psychological motives. The situation in Russia called for some diversion, and the feeling of neutrals similarly looked for some relief from the long-drawn-out series of German successes. Yet from a purely military point of view it would have been the best policy to continue Joffre's tactics of limited offen-



sives, necessitating costly and wasting counter-attacks until the spring of 1916 found the Allies with an overwhelming accumulation of shell, and with the new British armies at their highest strength and efficiency. This point of view was, however, not allowed to prevail, and concerted action was agreed to by the British and French.

What were the conditions of success for a great offensive? To appreciate these it is necessary to consider the aim upon which the Allies were bent, and this may best be realised by a retrospective glance at the conquest of Galicia by Germany. The Donajetz was a fortified line, and by completely breaking it the Germans were able to push back the Russian armies almost entirely out of Galicia and finally out of Warsaw and Brest. The aim of the Allies was so to disintegrate the German line that they could push the Germans back out of northern France, and initiate anew the war of movements which might, with fair fortune, see the Germans finally pushed to the Rhine. To achieve this the German lines had to be broken over a considerable front. Great forces cannot be usefully, successfully, or even safely deployed through a gap of less than from fifteen to twenty miles. The German lines, therefore, had to be broken over a front of that length. The Allies probably did not think they had at the moment a sufficient superiority in men and material to achieve a victory of this character. But they knew that the threat of it would be sufficient to draw the bulk of the German reserves into the threatened area. This was their prime and immediate purpose, though the chance of a decisive stroke was borne in mind. It was a necessary condition of success that the area of the main attack should be concealed until the last moment. Subsidiary attacks must therefore be made at various other parts of the front, so that the enemy could not safely withdraw his troops from them to resist the main shock of the advance.

There was another condition, desirable if not necessary, though, unfortunately, impossible to obtain. Common prudence would have suggested that no one of the Allies should initiate major operations alone. By so doing the enemy was left free to make the best use of his interior lines, and use all his resources now upon one front and now upon the other. What more could a general ask of fate than that it should present him his enemy in relays, so that he might defeat each separately, when he would stand no chance against the whole? Unfortunately, Russia could not at this moment initiate great operations, just as the Allies were unable to attack in force upon the Western front when the ordeal of Russia began in May, the millstone of unpreparedness being ever about their neck. It was, however, necessary to strike, though to strike at this moment meant to strike on one front only.

The Allies' problem was unique in warfare. The Russian front had not completely realised the possibilities of trench warfare, or the May offensive would have had a different fate. The position on the Western front had been foreseen, by a strange prevision, by the Russian writer M. Bloch, who, a decade before, wrote a book to prove that such were the possibilities of defensive warfare that, in a war between fairly equal opponents, after the first shock of arms the opposing lines would dig themselves in, and the war would stand or fall by the exhaustion of the opponents. It is true that he had not made allowance for the fact that the history of civilisation is the history of problem and solution; and he had, therefore, not realised that science can destroy what science had planned. Still his book was a strange prevision of the possibilities and atmosphere of positional warfare which held the Western front in its grasp.

The Allied and enemy entrenchments had become molelike structures. In vaults, in drains, in caves, in galleries patiently tunnelled out of the earth the troops were hidden, and armed with the most terrible weapon of defence—the machine-gun. Sometimes there were galleries under galleries to a distance of twenty or forty feet. These were connected and bound into a homogeneous intricacy of defence by communication trenches. In some places, hills were tunnelled or hewn down; at other points, the entrenchments were finished off with concrete or steel cupolas and steel revolving casemates. The familiar countryside took a new face from new and strangely contrived features. There were mounds of sandbags with hidden machine guns lying expectant among them. There were concrete emplacements built into the hillsides, and communicating on the declivity over the summit with interminable galleries. All the odds, in attack upon such positions, were on the side of the defenders, who could lie cunningly hidden behind their machine guns, ready and able to hold off heavy odds.

But the British at Neuve Chapelle had discovered the first step in the solution of this formidable problem. With a sufficient accumulation of artillery and munitions the whole of this patiently contrived intricacy could be beaten to dust. Some of the high-explosive shell could blast as deeply as the galleries had been laid, and blow the whole system to bits. This was the chief means which the Allies intended to use to cut their way through the German lines. Guns of all sorts and sizes, from the great 14-inch howitzers, far back, to the mine-throwers and trench artillery, were to pour upon the German lines a rain of explosive such as the world had never seen before. Nor was it to be an indiscriminating bombardment. High overhead the aeroplanes watched and corrected the range of the guns, pointing out positions which had not been sufficiently reduced. Other aeroplanes of heavier build took a more active share in the bombardment, flying to the enemy junctions behind the lines and blowing them to bits with high explosive. These air "Dreadnoughts" had their escort of lighter planes which fulfilled the function of light and battle cruisers, attacking any enemy aeroplanes which attempted to disturb the bombing aeroplanes. This very deadly form of attack began before the fall of Warsaw, when the centres of distribution for the Crown Prince's Argonne army were attacked by large fleets of Allied planes.

The success of the bombardment depended upon these aeroplanes, not only in their work of "spotting" and correcting the range, but in the far more arduous, dangerous, and prolonged work which had gone on before. Every foot of the ground had to be photographed, and the changes which took place daily had to be embodied in charts without delay. The bombardment which began about the middle of August continued day after day, week after week. Practically the whole of the front came in for its share, and at the end of the third week in September it swelled to a climax. Especially was this the case in Champagne, north of Loos and the Artois, until about the 21st, when it grew to a deluge of shell which ceased not a moment until the infantry was loosed. There is evidence that the Germans not only knew what was in store, but even knew where the main blow would fall. Certainly by the 22nd they could hardly be in doubt on this point.

The place which the French had chosen for their main attack was the battlefield of Attila, which speculation had long marked out as the site of decisive battles; but it was a far different ground and a very different battle from that which the Hun leader knew. It is inhospitable chalky country with few roads and villages,



but it offered a fairly clear sweep for a great offensive. From Auberive to Ville-sur-Tourbe, a distance of some fifteen and a half miles, was the section upon which the French attack fell. General Castelnau, a Royalist and a Catholic, was in charge of the armies on the central section of the Western front, and it was with the 4th Army under General Langle de Cary the attack was conducted. General Pétain's army was in reserve, and took part in the later stages of the battle. An attack by the British troops under Sir Douglas Haig and the French under D'Urbal was to be made at the same time. The two heavy blows were directed at right angles to one another. This strategic conception was retained to the end of the war. As the German lines made a right angle towards Noyon, the strategy was inherent in the situation, since the lines of advance would converge and threaten to cut out the troops concentrated in the sector lying between them.

**Champagne.**—In a broad survey the Champagne country would be described as monotonous. To the eye of the soldier it was a tangle of small ridges and defensive works which had to be encountered and dealt with one by one. The most difficult part of the front was the east, to the north of Massiges, with its fortified peaks known as Hills 191 and 199. On its left lay the easier section north of Beausejour, looking towards Maisons de Champagne. To the west was the region north of Mesnil, with the wooded ground behind, towards Tahure; and the Mesnil ridge (the Butte de Mesnil) and Trapeze Hill, east and west respectively. This was a highly organised section. It was flanked by the ground north of Perthes lying between Bricot Hollow (Trou Bricot) and the Mesnil ridge, with the Butte de Tahure, Hills 201 and 193 behind. Farther west lay the ground between Souain and Somme Py, with the Navarin farm between. The last section ran to Auberive, and comprised about five miles of rising ground covered with spruce and pine, and including the Épine de Vedegrange.

Such in general outline was the ground over which the French elected to make their great assault upon the German lines. Joffre had tested it time after time, and in the winter had seized small points here and there as has been described already. Substantially the positions were those to which the Germans had been forced back after the Battle of the Marne; and like others over the vast Western front, they were capable of such strong defence that a general of genius, foreseeing how the war would tend to shape itself, would have risked almost anything to force the victory of the Marne home and avoid such a positional war upon his own territory. The defensive lines covered the Bazencourt-Grand Pré railway, the connecting link between the German armies of the centre and of the east. This important line had been used as a sort of backbone for the whole German defensive system. From it to various parts of the line light railways had been constructed; and these formed one of the most formidable features of the defence, for they enabled supply and reinforcements to be taken with the greatest dispatch to any part of the line which might be threatened. This railway line may be considered to be the prime and immediate objective of the French attack. Break it and the way lay open to sever the western from the eastern armies.

The attack in the Lens-Arras area was designed to make this possibility more practicable, so that if the line were broken in Champagne and the Germans were driven to retreat, they would find other Allied armies threatening their rear as they attempted to fall back. A series of elaborate feints was designed to distract attention from the main thrust in Champagne.

These feints were one of the most instructive factors in a plan of great complexity and subtlety. Clearly the Germans had to be kept in ignorance as long as possible as to where the main blow was to fall. Its success would depend almost wholly upon their being unable to concentrate with the greatest speed a sufficiently heavy force for the defence. Accordingly *the whole front* was subjected to an intense bombardment, and besides the subsidiary attack which was to be aimed in the Loos-Artois district, the plan included a number of feints and diversions upon various parts of the front. Upon the British sections there were to be movements at four different points; but these are best considered with the Battle of Loos, which they were designed to assist. The Battle of Loos was part of the great offensive; these feints, both upon the British front and over the whole line, were not meant to be pressed, but were, like the stupefying gas and smoke used at Loos, devices to facilitate the driving home of the main attacks.

Two of the feint attacks were made upon the extremities of the Allied line. From their first entry into Ostend the Germans had been nervous about the safety of the Belgian coast. The old manœuvre battle could not be restored unless there were somewhere a flank under pressure upon which a turning movement could be initiated. The north-west coast of Belgium was such a flank; if troops could be landed there in sufficient force\* the German line could be turned. It was this plain possibility which formed the source of the German nervousness, and caused them to build gun emplacements along the coast, and to fortify in every way which their ingenuity could suggest. In spite of all precautions, the Germans could not be sure that their defences were adequate to keep out a determined enemy. They had not lost the lesson of Gallipoli, which showed that British soldiers could and would land against every obstacle of nature and art. The German nervousness was deliberately encouraged. Indeed, the Admiralty set apart a distinguished officer and a large fleet of ships for that one purpose.

Vice-Admiral Bacon, with his fleet of seventy-nine ships, including monitors armed with the heaviest guns, cruisers, and a sufficient complement of smaller fry, from 22nd August, when the whole front in France began to be bombarded, again and again visited the Belgian coast from Nieuport to the Dutch frontier, and searched it with his guns. Towards the third week in September the bombardments were more prolonged and more destructive. On the 19th there was a heavy shelling of the whole strip of coast; five days later a violent bombardment was opened against Zeebrugge and the surrounding district with one part of the fleet, while another made a fierce onslaught upon the fortified defences of Ostend. The following day there was another bombardment, at the very time that the troops were going forward past Loos and towards Tahure. The positions north of Nieuport came in for special treatment upon the 26th and 27th, and on the last day of the month. These multiplied bombardments, accompanied as they were by attacks by the French and British about Ypres, tended to give the impression that a landing was to be attempted, and such an impression had its share in detaining forces away from the areas where the main attacks were actually being made.

This feint could only have achieved the purpose for which it was designed because of the inherent possibility that it might well be more than a feint. The same is to be said of the other feint attack made under the direction of General Dubail, who

\* The plan mooted by Mr. Churchill and Sir John French in the winter of 1914-15 was not thought practicable at the time by the French Staff, who would have had to take a considerable part in it.



commanded the armies of the east from the point about Verdun, where Castelnau's command ceased. The French by this time held a large part of Upper Alsace. During the summer they had made some significant advances in the Vosges, taking Metzeral, and pushing their advance posts near to Munster. They had here and farther south secured command of some of the entrances into the Alsatian plain, and a descent from the Vosges to secure the Upper Rhine had long been a project favoured and predicted by military theorists. It had the considerable advantage that if pressed to any extent it would quickly remove the war area to true German territory. Accordingly, General Dubail, in the early part of September, began to show a liveliness which would suggest a coming offensive, and upon the great day he attacked with violence, but did not press his advance to any significant success.

So the dull thunder went on over the whole front for some weeks. After the terrible crescendo of the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 24th, it suddenly ceased on the Champagne sector; and, like more shells released from the guns, the French infantry shot forward for the main attack. Almost immediately they secured possession of the front line of German trenches.

For two whole days there had been no communication between the battle front and the rest of France. Then on the night of 24th September an extra tot of wine was served to the men, and the following inspiring *communiqué* was issued from the Generalissimo:—

“GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, September 23.

“SOLDIERS OF THE REPUBLIC,

“After months of waiting, which have allowed us to increase our strength and resources while the enemy has been using his, the hour has come to attack and to conquer, to add new pages of glory to those of the Marne, of Flanders, the Vosges, and Arras.

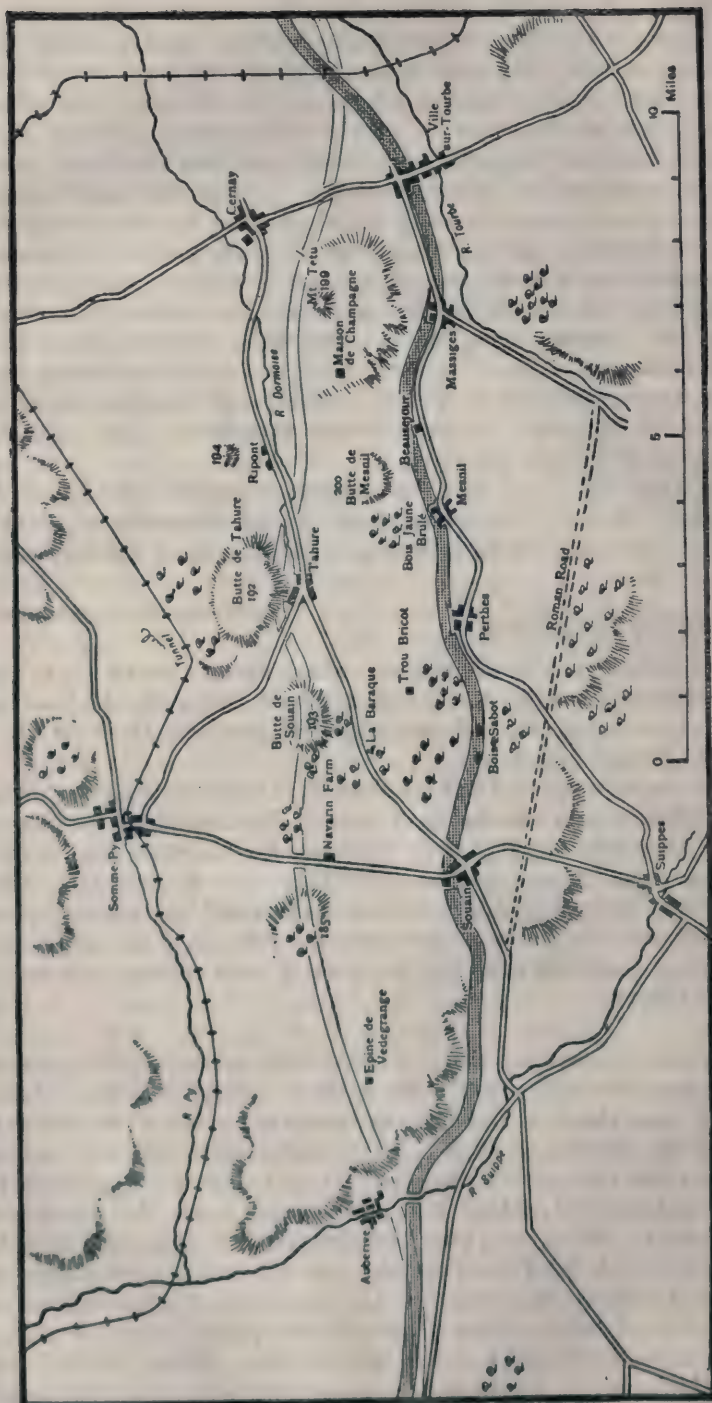
“Behind the storm of iron and fire unloosed, thanks to the labour of the factories of France, where your comrades have worked day and night for you, you will go forward to the assault together upon the whole front in close lines with the Armies of our Allies. Your assault will be irresistible. It will carry you, with your first effort, up to the enemy's batteries beyond the fortified line opposing you.

“You will give the enemy neither truce nor rest till victory has been won. On, then, with your whole heart for the liberation of your country, and for the triumph of right and liberty.

J. JOFFRE.”

The response was extraordinary. The French soldier is a companionable being with an extreme simplicity behind his subtlety and intelligence. When the word of command came the grey-blue line swept forward with a fierce onset that is characteristic of the soldiers of France. The country was overcast with clouds, but nothing could dim the spirit of the infantry; and there was a precision in the plans which seems almost inimitable. One moment—at 9.14—the trenches were being shelled; the next—at 9.15—the guns had changed their range, and were deluging the country beyond while the French infantry shot forward towards the battered lines.

It was as it will presumably always be. Artillery is not an economical arm; and be the ranging ever so good, the damage is not proportionate to the expenditure of shell. At some places the trenches were no more. Even the small redoubts and siege works, into which the lines fall on assault, were rased to the ground, and the infantry swept past towards the second line. At other places small machine-



The September Battle in Champagne. The original line and the front achieved on September 29.



gun emplacements still lay untouched, and the Germans exacted a heavy price before they were driven out. Upon one section an army corps went forward with a loss hardly more than that of a normal day in the trenches. At other places whole companies were wiped out before small works or elements of the line which had escaped destruction.

Before noon the German defence had been broken and recovered. The front line lay in the hands of the French ; but the German artillery, which had the range already calculated to perfection, had recovered from the shock of its long bombardment and was pouring into the broken line a storm of shell. In some places *behind* the French front there were small but very fierce sieges at work. Emplacements and underground burrows had been passed which had now to be taken and cleared. The troops flanking the advance, as is usual in such offensives, had to endure the most terrible ordeal. The German artillery upon the broken sides of the gap turned its fire upon them, so that they were attacked in flank as well as in front. The line, too, was so irregular, so bitten into here and there, that the defenders in numerous parts of the front were able to bring a converging fire to bear. About the house called Épine de Videgrange, not far from Auberive, the French dashed forward only to find their progress barred by unbroken barbed wire, massed together in intricate pattern. This gave the Germans the opportunity to counter-attack in force, and the small advance here was forced back a little.

At the other end of the line the French Colonial troops, with the intrepid Marchand\* at their head, forced their way to the summit of the Massiges plateau in about twenty minutes, and were then held up. In between, the line had fallen into detached works which gave the force to the re-entrant angles of the line. The works consisted of masses of fortified line, strengthened by machine-gun emplacements and by rows upon rows of trenches ; and the French, seizing the weaker connecting threads of the system, sought to get round the stronger knots of the defence.

The section east of the Auberive line formed a re-entrant arc about Souain. The horns of the arc were highly fortified to defend the weaker apex which had been approached in the days of preparation by patient mining and sapping during the night. Oddly enough, such was the fierceness of the French assault and so well had the preparation been made, that in less than an hour the whole of the first line defences on the western horn of the arc, a depth of fortified trenches of about a mile and a half, had been conquered. The eastern horn of the arc held out during the first day, the salient of the Bois Sabot being a mass of machine guns which had escaped in the preparatory bombardment. But on the apex of the arc, while the eastern defences were being taken, the infantry ran over the two trenches almost up to Navarin farm.

The most interesting part of the battle took place between the Souain-Somme Py road and Ripont, on the Souain-Cernay road, north of Maisons de Champagne. The attack upon part of this section has just been described ; but it was the country farther north and east which loomed largest in the battle. It was wooded and high ; and although directly north of Perthes, the defence line was simple and weak, between the Bois Sabot and this point was a most heavily fortified bastion. It was composed of a number of trenches running north and south, with large communication trenches linking them up. These formed, as it were, only the first line.

\* General, then Major, Marchand was known to the world before from his dramatic meeting with Kitchener at Fashoda. He fell badly wounded early in the battle.

Beyond lay the wooded trap of the Bricot Hollow, perhaps two and a half miles deep. Farther behind still lay the second line defence, linked between the Souain and Tahure ridges. Attacking to the north of Perthes, the French swept forward, carrying the front trenches and even the support line, and sweeping on to the wood of Bricot Hollow, where they took prisoner some German officers in their pyjamas. The completeness of the surprise needs no further proof. Farther west, in the strong bastion known as the "pocket," the Germans, enveloped by the advancing French, had been compelled to surrender. All these points had not been carried without loss. Along the Perthes-Tahure road the advance had to be made almost by inches. *Fortins* and small blockhouses held each point of vantage; and even solitary machine guns caused so terrible a loss that resourceful French officers brought up artillery and shelled them out.

Yet everywhere in this section of the line the French reaped the fruits of surprise. It is clear now that the Germans were so confident of the resisting power of their "steel wall" that they had taken no extra precautions; and indeed, as we have seen, slept or gamed as seemed good to them. Batteries of light and heavy artillery were taken. It had begun to rain, and it may be the heavy storm contributed somewhat to the surprise; but it undoubtedly made the spotting for the French artillery impossible, and thereby checked the advance. The men were covered with thick chalk mud, which was spattered about on all sides; and the driving rain obscured the vision. On the Souain and Tahure ridges the German guns were actively shelling the infantry advancing between. They made good targets, as the broken ground, the detached nature of the obstacles, and the almost blinding rain had broken down the order of the advance; and to the normal confusion of a resisted advance these other factors added very greatly. Still the officers were busy trying to restore the unity of their commands; and, despite the now increasing bombardment and every other handicap, the men reached Hill 193, which flanks the Souain ridge on the east, and the Tahure ridge. There they rested at the end of the day.

Farther east, the defensive wall had escaped with less damage. The Ravin des Cuisines (about half a mile north of Beausejour) and the works west and east were, with one exception, the strongest strip of the line; and after a whole day's incessant fighting, only a short length of front line trench to the east of the ravine had been taken, and doubtless this was due to the success still farther east, where the French had crossed the work known as the Bastion and had reached the summit of Maisons de Champagne. The surprise was not so great here, since attempts were being made to remove the artillery, when the French infantry solved the difficulty in their own way. General Baratier, with a small body of Colonial horse, was on the move; but the cavalry had not the opportunity which it was thought might come to them. And farther east still the French Colonial troops had reached the summit of the plateau of Massiges. From west to east a rent of nearly sixteen miles had been torn in the German defensive system, and the depth of the gap varied between half a mile at the Ravin des Cuisines and two and a half miles towards the Tahure ridge. They had taken guns of all calibres and over 12,000 prisoners. The first day's success was so great that sympathetic observers thrilled with expectation.

So large a number of prisoners taken, so great a length of line captured, implied a heavy toll of dead and wounded. This drain was the culmination of the long



bombardment which must have made inroads upon the German forces. And the fact is amply borne out by the quietness of the night. The Germans neither bombarded nor counter-attacked, but made their preparations for reinforcing the defence, and, for the rest, had their hands full in strengthening rear defence works. On the French side, too, all was preparation. Troops were being reinforced by drafts and new battalions, the heroes of the advance were being rested, and the guns were being drawn up to the positions for taking up the bombardment on the morrow. The artillery was brought up in places to the very heart of the positions so lately won.

There could be no doubt about the completeness of the surprise the French had achieved. On the first day the whole German organisation went to pieces. They had overrated the strength of the defensive line, and underrated the power of their adversary. Indeed, this was one of the most splendid features of the whole battle. French soldiers, deprived of their officers, promptly initiated some improvised command, and went forward in perfect order under skilful direction. As against this, the Germans, apparently having lost their heads, threw into the breach any reinforcements they could lay their hands upon. Men were rushed from the Argonne in motor cars, and flung breathless into the confusion in small details. There was no order, no attempt to link up the units to a whole of some strength. Divisions were split up at random, battalions thrown anywhere without thought, new positions entrenched only a few inches. Such local reserves as could be obtained did no more than fill the wastage. Even the German artillery failed. It was badly served, badly trained, badly directed.

In the following days the advance was pressed home into the second line, and in some places beyond. It was pressed against an increasing resistance; for the Germans, once shaken out of their crude self-satisfaction by the imminence of the peril, soon reorganised the defensive system, and contrived to save the line from being smashed to powder completely, though at great cost. The further fighting had none of the characteristics of a great advance, though order had been restored and units were linked up. It broke up, in fact, into a number of sieges of various defensive details. At some places the advance had penetrated barely half a mile before being held up. Thus the Bois Sabot, a salient forming a sort of horseshoe about the foot of a gentle slope, had resisted all attempts to capture it on the first day. The bombardment had not destroyed the extraordinary maze of barbed wire and the numerous underground galleries. Here the machine guns took a fearful toll of life, and the sloping field of fire was almost ideal for the defenders. By the 27th the work was completely invested by the junction of the column operating from Souain up the Souain-Tahure road, and the column which had struck up north of Perthes.

The reduction of the work was still not accomplished. The Germans, although almost dead from fatigue and starvation, held out for two whole days. The redoubt was invested and the defenders were summoned to surrender, but replied by shooting the French representatives. The bulk of the Germans that night made a desperate attempt to break through to their own army, but were hurled back with the heaviest loss. On the 28th, the colonel commanding the French Foreign Legion, having asked for some work of daring, was ordered to carry the Bois Sabot by a frontal attack. The French investing force lay close to the earthwork when the Legion, loudly cheered, went forward to the attack. They went forward in the early

afternoon in single file at a sharp trot. They were shot at from the front and by the converging fire from the ends of the horseshoe. The men seemed to fall as quickly as they ran forward, and the ground became a shambles. Sometimes, according to a correspondent in the *New York Times*, the shelling was so heavy and sustained that the dead men were rolled along like logs. The wire was battered down by rifle butts, the cutters having been discarded; but only one wounded man reached the trenches from the whole of the first battalion.

Behind were other men, and these leaping into the trenches cleared out the front section, and the remaining Germans, convinced of the hopelessness of continuing so unequal a struggle, gave in. The French front by this time lay well to the north in the second line defences. But this conquest of conquered territory was the characteristic feature of the novel warfare of this great battle. It reached perhaps its highest intensity in the struggle for the Main de Massiges. The "Hand" was so-called because of the peculiar features of its topography. It formed a sort of hand, stretched out, palm southwards. Three narrow almost parallel hills ran towards the south-west. In between them lay long ravines. They had been called, from their similarity to the first three fingers of the hand, Index, Middle, and Ring Finger; and the gullies between them Index gully, and so on. To have advanced up the valleys would have been madness. They were impassable. A few machine guns well placed would have held up an army. The back of the fingers, too, was crossed with trenches; but the French Staff had decided to take the position in a far simpler way than by challenging works which were of such strength. The troops were sent up eastward towards Hill 191, which flanked the Ring Finger gully, and westward where, as we have seen, they crossed the bastion work.

Thus installed on the back of the hand, the fight for the underground burrows became an affair of bombs and grenades. A semi-official account thus describes the conquest of the position: "Having announced in its *communiqué* of 29th September that the French had been unable to take the heights to the north of Massiges, the German General Staff announced in its *communiqué* of 30th September that Hill 191 had been evacuated because it was taken in the flank by artillery fire. In point of fact we reached the summit of these heights on 25th September, and during the following days completed their conquest. The number of prisoners we made there, together with the still greater number of German corpses which filled the trenches and the communication trenches on Hill 191, bear witness to the bitterness of the struggle. There was no question here of a voluntary evacuation or a retreat in good order, but of a broken resistance and a costly defeat. Our adversaries were holding a formidable bastion which assured, by flanking works, the security of a great stretch of their front in Champagne. They thought this bastion impregnable. We knew that the saying was current among them, 'Hill 191 can be held with two washerwomen and two machine guns.'

"The possession of this fortress was indispensable to the success of our attack, and the honour of the assault fell to the Colonial infantry, who wrote a new page of heroism in their history at Massiges. By our first assault on 25th September we reached the summit of the plateau. Our artillery had completely wrecked the slopes and ravines, and torn gaps in the barbed wire entanglements which the enemy had stretched below. The German regiments which occupied Hill 191 at the moment of attack, confident in the solidarity of their fortress, were disorganised and demoralised by the rapidity of our first rush. Their machine guns enabled them to



prolong their resistance, but under the weight of our artillery and grenade fire they gave little by little. Reinforcements selected from the best troops of the Crown Prince's army were sent to their assistance. These newcomers did justice to their reputation. Overwhelmed by our shells and grenades, they clung to their trenches. 'Surrender,' shouted in German the colonel of one of our colonial regiments, who was advancing with his grenadiers and had reached a distance of thirty yards from the enemy. A German lieutenant fired at him and missed. Not one of his men escaped. There are so many corpses in the trenches of Hill 191 that at certain points of the plateau they literally fill up the trenches, and one has to walk over them exposed to the enemy's fire.

"Our methodical advance was continued from 25th September to 30th September. As the trenches were conquered the Germans, surrounded in the intervening communication trenches, raised their hands in surrender. We took them prisoners in groups of about a thousand, and amongst them were several officers. One officer swore at his men. 'I can only make them advance with the stick or the revolver,' he said. When they saw that the possession of the heights was being wrenched from their grasp, the German General Staff attempted a counter-attack, which debouched from the north-east; but the assaulting troops, as they deployed, came under the fire of our machine guns and artillery, and were swept away in a few moments. The survivors fled in disorder. Our troops, seeing the enemy give ground, continued the fight with joyous ardour. 'I cannot find enough men to take the prisoners back,' said an officer. 'They all want to remain up here.'"

Such an account gives a number of elements which characterised the whole conflict along this sector. The Germans, indeed, fought with amazing courage, and sometimes the fighting was so stubborn that the French Grenadiers were allowed to get up to the trenches, and were at times killed by their own grenades. Day by day the fight proceeded, and the advance became smaller in extent if not in tactical value. By the evening of the 26th the total number of prisoners had risen to 16,000, including at least 300 officers. Although the French were attacking the German second lines, they were also, at the same time, reducing points they had passed. Bois Sabot was, as we have seen, one of these; so, too, was the Main de Massiges. Both were taken on 28th September, and on the same day positions at Bricot Hollow were reduced. The strong redoubt called the "Works of the Defeat," which formed part of the first line, was not seriously impaired until 1st October, when the offensive had been in operation for over a week.

The French front line had been pushed forward along the whole front in Champagne, but far from equally. It was farthest advanced towards Tahure, and least changed to the immediate east in the extremely strong Mesnil region. This fact alone illustrates the extraordinary character of the positions when the opposing salients adjoined each other. The general form of the new French front was that of an arc resting upon Auberive and a point north of Ville-sur-Tourbe, with its apex towards Tahure. But there was a sharp re-entrant curve almost due south of Tahure. About this section of the front the fighting persisted longest. From north to south the points upon which the resistance centred were not two miles distant, and a line drawn about a mile and a half east of Tahure would cover the extent of the ground laterally. The Tahure hill was part—and an important part—of the German second line defence. It offered a splendid position for observation, and being only 2,000 yards or so from the Bazancourt-Grand Pré railway, its possession virtually

gave control of the railway. Tahure village lay at the south-western foot of the hill in a slight depression. Its ruins had been turned to good account by the Germans, who, treating the cellars as underground rooms, turned them into galleries by building connections between them, and connected them up with the organised defences of the hill beyond. The hill itself had been turned into almost one huge gun. Upon it General Heeringen's engineers had lavished all their skill, and about the 3rd and 4th October George Wegener, the special correspondent of the *Cologne Gazette*, had been boasting of its strength. The Breton and Vendean troops who were operating in this quarter of the line had pushed their front forward upon the first day of the offensive to the slopes of Hill 199, the Tetu hill, and they were left in a position on the western flank of the hill. Facing, therefore, to the east, they pushed on day after day against its flanks. Nowhere, except in the weaker links of the German Champagne defensive system, had frontal attacks achieved much success. They had for the most part to be urged under the handicap of converging fire, a factor which the Germans pressed into service wherever at all possible. But when the French succeeded in getting upon the flank of even the strongest defence works, they in their turn were able to bring a converging fire to bear upon the position.

It was upon 6th October that Tahure village and the hill were seized by the French. Immediately they became the theatre of even fiercer fighting. The German Staff, realising their importance, counter-attacked repeatedly with the utmost vigour. For about two whole days and nights the Germans refused to admit the unpalatable truth, and hurled their men against the key positions time after time. They shelled them, bombed and mined them, threw massed infantry against them—but to no purpose. The lines at this point were in an unstable position, and it was clear that the French must either go forward or retreat. They had pushed their positions forward about the Navarin farm and along the Tahure hill; but thence the Germans had held their position on a line almost due south about Hill 196. This hill, lying north of Mesnil, had escaped in the bombardment. Its defences were extremely intricate. Eastward the Mesnil height flanked it. On the west two rounded heights, numbered 187, formed its defensive bastion. These hills, sown with elaborate entrenchments, covered with cunningly devised and armoured gun emplacements, were to cause much trouble to the French.

The northern height fell into the hands of the attackers quite early, but the southern hill, holding the Trapeze work, held out for nearly three weeks. It was under a converging fire; but although element after element of the fortress was smashed to bits and seized, the Germans held out. The work came in for treatment which was certainly relentless and would almost be described as unbearable. A huge mine, charged with some twenty-two tons of high explosive, was exploded and blew about one hundred yards of the remaining part of the Trapeze work to bits. The trench guns threw an incessant stream of shells into the work; artillery and machine guns watered them day and night. At length the defence was abandoned, and the French upon the 8th took possession, finding 43 wounded among the dead, and rifles and machine guns strewn about in disorder. This signal success was accompanied by another upon the same day. The ravine of La Goute formed the centre of the main bastion between Tahure and Hill 196. At dawn on the 8th the French attacked along the whole length of the line of the wooded country, and were able to seize the trenches and with them large supplies of cigars and provisions. The



attack, occurring at the moment when the Germans were being relieved, involved the fresh companies ; some it dispersed and some were taken.

**Loos and the Artois.**—Meanwhile the attacks about Loos and the Artois had been following a similar rhythm.

The part assigned to the British army in the great offensive was a significant link in the Allied plan. The aim of the Allies upon this section of the front was to force their way towards the plain of the Scheldt between La Bassée and Arras. In effect, an offensive in this region meant the resumption of the battles of May and June, in which General D'Urbal with the 10th French Army had achieved such signal success. He had captured the height of Notre Dame de Lorette, an achievement which represents in bald language a world of heroism ; he had taken the villages of Ablain, St. Nazaire, and Carency, with the white works to the south ; the village of Neuville St. Vaast, and the Labyrinth on the Arras-Lens road. He had cleared the sugar refinery west of Souchez, the Malon Mill to the south, and had even captured and held for three weeks the cemetery of Souchez. By heroic encounter he had straightened out the line over a considerable area, and blotted out the German salient.

These successes prepared the way for the Allied offensive in the area. The German front to be attacked by the French stretched through Lievin, Angres, the Bois-en-Hache, the eastern slopes to Souchez. This village was a fortress upon which the German engineer had spent untold thought. It lay at a junction of four roads, to Angres, Béthune, Ablain, and Arras. It had been approached by the French who still clung to positions near its western borders and looking down upon it from the north-west. South-west the Carency and Nazaire streams had been dammed to form an inundated area, and to the south the cemetery and Cabaret Rouge had been turned into strong fortresses. East of Souchez, Hill 119 and Hill 140 were heavily entrenched and tunnelled. These, like all the Vimy heights, being extremely steep upon their eastern sides, offered small chance to the French artillerist, and the tunnels to the eastern slopes beneath the crests lead to the emplacements of the heavy artillery. The village of Givenchy-en-Gohelle, slightly north-east of these entrenchments, held more German artillery. Petit Vimy and Vimy were entrenched, and their lines extended westward to the thickly wooded crests of La Folie. This section of the front was one which had been turned almost into one huge fortress. Villages, factories, tunnelled heights—together constituted a problem for the attack which seemed to defy solution.

The British problem was not so difficult. During September their right wing had been extended to about Grenay. The German line lay generally west of the Loos-Hulloch-Haisnes ridge. This or the Vimy heights captured, the German hold upon Lens would be seriously weakened. But such a general view conveys no just impression of the task which confronted Sir Douglas Haig with the 1st British Army. The La Bassée-Hulloch-Lens road ran behind the German defences like the chord of an arc. Upon it were superimposed the defences of Lens, La Bassée and ultimately Lille. Below La Bassée the German front line ran well in front of Haisnes through Pit No. 8, a shaft with a slag heap crowded with machine guns. This, a sufficiently formidable obstacle by itself, was supported by the Hohenzollern Redoubt, a powerfully fortified work, connected with Pit 8 by three communication trenches. Farther south the stone quarries had been turned into a redoubt which could only be taken at a heavy sacrifice of life. West of Hulloch the

line turned westward to rest south-west of Loos upon the large slag heaps called the Double Crassier. Behind this line lay a number of works, so that if the front trenches should give way there would still be rallying points beyond. All this ground was new to the British troops who had only just been brought there, and it offered, therefore, a further handicap.

The British attack at Loos and the French attack below that town were, as we have seen, to be assisted by a number of feints upon the Franco-Belgian front to the north. If a landing were to be attempted at Ostend or thereabouts, it would be supported by an advance from Ypres; and in order to strengthen the illusion that they really had designs upon the Belgian coast, the French and British troops arranged to make a demonstration as though, in fact, they were about to break through and drive the Germans back upon Ghent. The demonstration was accompanied by four other attacks. Sir Herbert Plumer's army carried out one of these against a section of the line, a third of a mile in extent, stretching between the Ypres-Roulers railway and Ypres-Menin road. The attack was launched by the explosion of a large mine after an intense bombardment, at 4.30 A.M. on 25th September. The mine was exploded north of the Bellewarde farm, which was strongly defended by machine guns. The men were off before the smoke of the explosion had cleared away; and the right and centre both achieved tangible successes. A battalion of the Shropshires carried the right into the German lines, in spite of the terrible machine-gun fire. The Oxford and Bucks also got into the German lines on the right centre; but the battalion of the Rifle Brigade on the left were held up by the German machine guns, and as the whole movement was, therefore, handicapped, the troops were withdrawn to their initial positions.

Another demonstration was carried out by the Lincolnshires, Royal Berkshires, and Rifle Brigade against the German salient to the south of Armentières in the neighbourhood of Bois Grenier. The centre was alone held up upon this occasion, and the chance was lost of cutting the neck of the salient. The attack started like that to the north, at 4.30 A.M., and the Lincolnshires on the left stormed the work at Le Bridoux, a most strongly fortified redoubt, and captured 80 prisoners. The nose of the salient was supported by a work called the "Lozenge," the trenches and dugouts of which were extremely intricate and strong. The Berkshires went forward with great gallantry; but the blazing searchlight thrown upon them made their progress difficult, and no impression could be made upon the positions. This discounted the achievement of the Rifle Brigade, who went forward with such swiftness that in an hour and a half they had installed themselves in the second line defences; but the Berkshires' check upon their left made it impossible for them to maintain their positions, and they had to fall back to the first line of enemy troops. By 3 P.M. the Germans had recovered and were preparing to launch a spirited and vigorous counter-attack. Threatened by this the British withdrew to a line very little advanced from their old positions.

There was also an attack made upon the Pietre hill. This movement was carried out by the 2nd Leicesters, a battalion of the Black Watch, and a force of Indians belonging to the Meerut Division. In this attack the Black Watch forced the centre successfully, crossed several lines of trenches, with their pipes playing, and reached the reserve positions by the mill. But they then found themselves in a position of grave peril. Both flanks had been held up by uncut wire, and the Black Watch were, therefore, liable to converging fire from north and south. Under



such circumstances they had to be withdrawn. Many deeds of heroism were done in this little action, and Kublir Thapa of the Gurkha Rifles won the V.C. for saving three soldiers. He was badly wounded himself, but he went out and brought back two of his fellow-countrymen and a wounded private of the Leicesters.

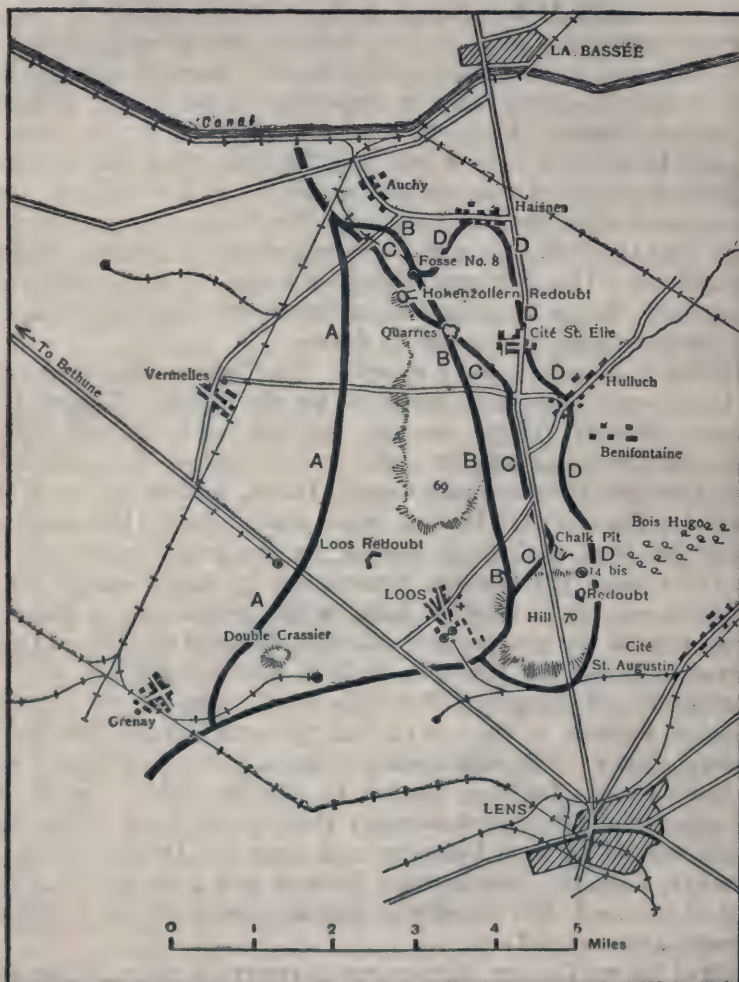
Farther south still battalions of the Cheshires and Wiltshires, forming part of the 1st Corps under General Hubert Gough, made an attack upon the German front near Festubert and Givenchy. Each of these attacks contributed in its way to deceive the enemy as to the true intention of the British command, and much—probably too much—trouble had been taken in disposition of the troops, so that in case of spies or vagrant German airmen little could be gleaned of the plans. Thus the 21st and 24th Divisions in reserve were kept far back where they might be thought ready to go to a number of quarters, and where, too, as it turned out, they were too far from the point where they were needed. The French reserves were accumulated near Arras ; but the Indian Cavalry Corps was placed at Doullens midway between Arras and Amiens. This, if it were discovered before the action, might well mislead the German Staff ; but as Doullens is about twenty-five miles from where the cavalry would be needed, it suggested too much finesse.

The British lines were heavily manned. Sir Douglas Haig was using the 1st and 4th Corps, each with three divisions, for the attack. The 1st Corps, under Lieut.-General Hubert Gough, was on the left, with its left lying over the Béthune-La Bassée Canal and its right on the Hulloch-Vermelles road. Before Auchy stood the 2nd Division under General Horne, with its left north of the canal. To the south lay Thesiger's 9th Division, which was to seize the Hohenzollern Redoubt. It was near this work the gallant commander was unfortunately killed. Farther south lay the famous 7th Division, commanded by Major-General Sir T. Capper, who died from wounds received at Loos on the second day of the battle. This division was to seize the quarries and take the village of St. Elie on the La Bassée-Hulloch road. Below the Vermelles-Hulloch road lay the 4th Corps under Sir Henry Rawlinson. It comprised Holland's 1st Division, on the left, McCracken's 15th Highland Division in the centre, and the 47th London Territorial Division under General Barter. The Highlanders belonged to the New Army ; and the 47th was the first complete Cockney division to take the field. The 4th Corps were directed against the high ground between Hulloch and Lens. They were to take the elevated redoubt between Vermelles and Loos, the Double Crassier slag heap east of Grenay, Loos, the road between Hulloch and Lens, and the Chalk Pit, Pit 14 bis east of the road, Hill 70 with its redoubt east of the road, and the Cité St. Auguste north and east of Lens.

The bulk of the 3rd Cavalry Division was in reserve in the right rear of Sir Henry Rawlinson's Corps, and as it had formerly been under his command, such an arrangement would not seem abnormal to any curious officer on the German Staff. The cavalry were to be loosed, if possible, to add to the confusion when the hill was taken ; and the Cavalry Corps lay some twelve miles or so distant at Bailleul-les-Permes. The main reserve, the infantry, upon which so much turns in these battles, was the 11th Corps formed of the Guards Division, under Lord Cavan, comprising the new Welsh Guards as well as the splendid historic regiments, the Grenadiers, Coldstreams, Scots and Irish, and the 21st and 24th Divisions of the New Army. The two latter were between Beuvry and Nœux-les-Mines, some four miles behind the lines, while the Guards were at Lillers, ten miles north-west of Béthune. The

new divisions included many men who had never been under fire before, and were merely the splendid material with which the army was provided so lavishly.

The British plan, if completely successful, would carry the armies through the whole German defensive system into the plain of the Scheldt. It would put Lens, Lievin, and Angres, and the northern Vimy heights at the mercy of the Allies, and



Battle of Loos. The British front—A A A, on the morning of September 25; B B B, on the evening of September 25; C C C, on October 1; D D D, farthest east on September 25.

would open the manœuvre battle. To achieve it there were almost six full divisions ready to take the offensive. There was a vast accumulation of artillery, patiently brought out from Great Britain, concentrated and trained. There were 18 pounders, 60 pounders, 4.5-inch howitzers. Towards the time for the offensive greater numbers of howitzers and heavy guns arrived. The British had also large stores of stupefying gas, and they were also provided with smoke bombs. The conditions for using these



expedients were a westerly wind, blowing steadily but not too strongly, and otherwise fair weather. Rain would turn the roads to streams of mud, fettering an advance and making the going difficult and precarious.

On 24th September the west wind came, though with it also came rain and mist. Throughout the day and night the artillery maintained its bombardment. Every feature of the German lines, carefully observed and accurately mapped, came in for its share of shell, and parapets, sandbag barriers, gun emplacements disappeared. The German lines lay between two hundred and five hundred yards distant. The intervening ground was rising and afforded the Germans a good field of fire. At 4.25 on Saturday morning all the guns took up the bombardment, and the deafening noise made the previous shelling seem like silence. The wind was now south-west, and was therefore not all that could be desired ; but this was the day when the bolt had to be loosed. About one hour later the stupefying gas and smoke were let off. It was misty already, but now a dense blackness settled down upon the country. The troops had their gas helmets on ready for the advance. But unfortunately the wind was treacherous on the northern section of the front and carried the gas and smoke past the German lines. Through this deadly mist of fume and smoke came shells and bullets. The effect was hardly to be borne.

At 6.30 the moment came for the advance. The men made an odd picture as they swept forward into the gas and smoke with their helmets and gas-masks. Friend and foe could not see each other. The Germans had been under the terrible fire so long that the garrison of the front line were in an advanced stage of demoralisation. The parapets were being knocked to bits in front of them. Guns were hurled back into the trench and buried. After such an experience came the gas and the almost more awful smoke. If the one threatened suffering, the other made confusion, under which it was impossible to guess what might happen. In some cases the German trenches were won simply through this confusion. The defenders had no means of telling until the men were upon them whether they were British or German. The troops went forward to the roar of guns. Farther south the French bombardment was continued as the French infantry were not able to go forward until later. And the British artillery, changing its range, began once more, in a few minutes, and with a longer range covered the country in which the German reserves lay.

The British line, as a whole, made startling and immediate progress, except on the extreme left where it made no headway at all. At this point the ground over which the advance had to be made was covered by the fortified area of La Bassée, and the troops were stopped by a deadly flank fire. The struggle raged fiercely round Givenchy, Auchy, and Cambrin ; but the armament of the German salient works was too heavy. To the south the 9th Division was attacking the Hohenzollern Redoubt and Pit 8, works which were as formidable as any the war has known. Yet the success was here prompt and striking. The 28th Brigade captured Pit 8, after a violent struggle on the slag heap and through the pit brow buildings ; and drove a wedge between the Hohenzollern Redoubt and the quarries. They turned and with the help of the 26th Brigade secured a hold upon the redoubt. The Germans could not be cleared from the work wholly owing to the firm stand of their troops to the north. But Capt. J. E. Adamson, of the 8th Battalion Gordon Highlanders, ran with his company towards Haisnes. The ground was covered by the German artillery ; but with a handful of his men he had succeeded by 8 A.M. in capturing the

village, and there he stood till 5 P.M., when, threatened from all sides with imminent destruction, he drew off his men in good order, earning a well-deserved D.S.O. The splendid 7th Division was sweeping ahead farther south. They captured the quarries and then threw their left towards Haisnes, in the rear of the Hohenzollern Redoubt; and the rest of the line fell upon St. Elie and pressed to Hulloch. In spite of its splendid success at first the 1st Corps fared badly later, and not only Haisnes but the bulk of the quarries had to be abandoned.

Meanwhile greater things had been achieved by Sir Henry Rawlinson and the 4th Corps. Their general line of front was directed towards the Hulloch-Lens road and such was the fierceness of the onset that Lens was at their disposal by noon. The 1st Division fought its way to the outskirts of Hulloch village, but received small help from its right wing which was held up by wire. This in the end proved a trap for the Germans, for they concentrated behind it, and when part of the 1st Brigade turned south from Hulloch they turned the position and captured 80 men. But the best progress was made by the Highland Division. Helped by gas and smoke they took the high redoubt on the Vermelles-Loos road, and though their left was uncovered through the brigade to the north being held up by the wire, they pressed on, attacked Loos from the north, and a little after 8 A.M. they had seized Chalk Pit, Pit 14 bis, Hill 70, with the strong work at its summit, and were in Cité St. Laurent. The Scots' magnificent advance was not equalled upon that day anywhere. They had a moment's wavering at the beginning when they were confronted with the necessity of going forward through the gas and smoke, and it was in that moment Piper Daniel Laidlaw of the 7th K.O.S.B. won a V.C. He coolly mounted the parapet and marched up and down playing the pipes till the men were all out. Even then he played on until he was wounded. These were New Army troops, and it is surely a thing worthy of record how these enthusiastic recruits pressed their triumphant advance. They were exposed to concentrated fire from all quarters. They seem hardly to have heeded it; but some help was given them by sending forward British guns to Loos, and by the co-operation of part of the 47th London Territorial Division on their right.

The 47th London Territorial Division went forward from Grenay, stormed the Double Crassier, and went ahead due east towards Loos. The cemetery had escaped untouched by the artillery, and the machine guns caused serious losses; but the men were not to be denied and pressed into the town. In the streets a hundred fierce struggles took place, and the Germans had to be bombed out of the houses one by one. This was perhaps the most prolonged of the bitter struggle; but Loos was at length in British hands. A few French women still remained there, and one, Mlle. Emilienne Moreau, a girl of eighteen, shot numbers of Germans whom she found attacking wounded British soldiers. She helped to give first aid, and her courageous action was recognised by the reward of the Croix de Guerre.

The French infantry were not sent forward until 12.25 P.M. The reason of the delay is not known, and no obvious reason can explain a delay which resulted in the British right flank being left in the air. There was no attempt to link up with the extraordinary gains to the north. The Scots were past Lens on the north. Their very success placed them in imminent peril, for they had forced a salient into the German line. If the 47th Division had had any help it could have pressed forward against the west of Lens. The French attack, in effect, simply resumed the old battle, which had hardly died down, for Souchez and the Vimy Ridge. The left of the



French line speedily swept the Germans from their remaining foothold upon the Notre Dame de Lorette plateau and got into the Bois de la Hache. They there came under a terrible fire, and streams of asphyxiating shells were poured into them. But they reached the Souchez stream north of the village, and farther south troops pressed forward from Carency and Ablain towards the Souchez cemetery and the Cabaret Rouge. The cemetery was lost and won; and the general success was not such as had been expected.

It is possible that General Foch had hoped that by entering the battle later the defences about Souchez would be deprived of all available reserves and considerably weakened of their proper complement. The works were certainly, it must be admitted, more highly fortified, more intricate, and more stubborn than those to the north, and the plan may have been that the French should go to the attack in force just when the Germans were least prepared, and were, in fact, about to launch a counter-attack against the British. But it is difficult to believe that such a plan, involving necessarily the severest ordeal upon the British division to the north, by exposing its flank, could have been countenanced by cool tactics, or agreed to by Sir John French. The two reserve divisions, 21st and 22nd, had been placed at the disposal of Sir Douglas Haig three hours after the opening of the battle in view of the exposed position of the detachment at Haisnes and the check upon the extreme left. But it was an hour and a half before they were in motion at Beuvry and Nœux-les-Mines, and the Guards' Division did not reach the latter place till sunset. This amazing disposition of troops betrayed the British. For the Guards were not available on that day at all, and the over-success of the Highland Division could not be maintained, and resulted in a withdrawal with heavy loss.

While the Scots were left very much to their own devices north and north-east of Lens, and the 7th Division was in a precarious position at Haisnes, wedged into the German defensive line, and the extreme left was held up against the B thune-La Bassée canal, and the Hohenzollern Redoubt and Pit 8 were resisting the advance, there was no sufficient help or energetic direction to troops so favourably placed for resuming the attack with reinforcements, but in so critical a plight against a counter-attack. And the Crown Prince of Bavaria, seizing upon an obvious period of indecision and the disjointed character of the line at the moment, delivered not long after noon a vigorous counter-attack against the Highlanders. The Germans issued from Lens, struck down from the east and north-east, assisted by an effective and excellently directed bombardment. The gallant soldiers of the 15th Division, who had been all too successful for the British Staff, had to abandon Cité St. Laurent and the bulk of Hill 70, the key position to Lens. Part of the 21st Division of the New Army was hurried up in support, but their march had been long, their food insufficient, and they were unblooded to such war conditions, as, indeed, to war altogether. They made no good show on that occasion, and the fault must lie with the command.

The first day of the great offensive, therefore, left the Allies in a strangely confused position. The British had driven a salient into the German lines and bitten off an irregular piece of the German position. Its southern boundary was a line through Grenay about the Double Crassier and round Loos; thence the line went eastward to the western slopes of Hill 70, up to about half a mile from the western houses of Hulloch, touched the edge of the quarries, east of St. Elie, bisected the Hohenzollern Redoubt, passed near Pit 8, and so westward to the original front.

South of Loos and upon Hill 70 the struggle was continued during the night, but the Germans were unable to recover any more lost ground. On the 26th the fighting was renewed, and the Highlanders attempted to advance once more, but without success. The 7th Division, which had played so fine a part on the 25th, succeeded in retaking the Hulloch quarries. Against this success must be placed the loss of Pit 14 bis. The French, however, had compelled the evacuation of the ruined Souchez and captured Bois-en-Hache. Altogether the Allies had secured nearly 4,000 prisoners, two-thirds of them being taken by the British, with 9 guns.

On 27th September the British made yet another attempt to recapture lost ground towards Lens. The Guards Division were the troops employed in this attack. Late in the afternoon the Irish Guards took the spinney at the north-eastern end of the Chalk Pit. The Scots Guards advanced against Pit 14 bis, and the work called the Keep to the north. But when night fell only the Chalk Pit and the spinney were in their hands, while below, at tremendous cost, the Grenadiers won up to the crests of Hill 70, unable to force their way farther and unwilling to go back. Such was substantially the position of things on the evening of the following day too. The French this day won the western heights of Vimy, reaching the dominating point, Hill 140; but the losses of the British and French had been so severe that Sir John French did not feel himself justified in pursuing the offensive, and the French were asked to take over the southern part of the salient the British had made in the German lines. On the last day of September the transfer began, and the 9th French Corps took over Loos and the western slopes of Hill 70, which, unfortunately, they later lost, an incident which led to the misleading explanations which did so much to arouse resentment among the British public during the war.

This taking over of the captured trenches about Loos may be taken as the ending of the first phase of the Battle of Loos; and though the French were vigorously pushing forward in that patient siege fashion which had been so successful in May and June, the net result to that moment had been the capture of trenches over a large area and the creation of a salient, the base of which could easily be covered by a fair calibre gun. There was no day without its struggle, no day but the Germans attempted to recapture part of the lost ground. While the British and French strove to assimilate their new territory, the Germans were preparing their grand counter-offensive. The attack took place upon 8th October. The usual bombardment heralded the onset, and when the shells had long been falling upon the Allies, machine guns were turned on. At about 4 p.m. the 1st Division, now holding the line from the Chalk Pit to Hulloch, saw advancing against their right the massed German infantry. They were met by a terrible Allied barrage, and the fire from rifles and machine guns. The Germans coming forward at a brisk trot began to fall to pieces. The line fell to groups, to individuals, and then melted away. At the Chalk Pit not a German reached his objective. North of Hulloch the enemy were not only beaten off, but were even followed back to their trenches and the British line extended. Part of the Double Crassier had been retaken by the Germans; but with this exception nothing came of the German counter-offensive except their loss of infantry, some 8,000 of whom strewed the ground about the salient. If the Germans lost so many dead, their total casualties must have been very high. Between 25,000 and 30,000 men had been sent forward. Only the shattered remnants of that significant force remained to find its way back.



So far the great battle of 25th September and the three following days had but created a position of unstable equilibrium. After the great British advance the Germans had made minor attempts to recover their lost ground by inches, and then the grand attempt of 8th October. Five days later the British made another endeavour to carry forward the line they held bounding the north of the salient. North of La Bassée the Indian Corps made a demonstration in force to pin the enemy to his trenches. About noon the British opened an intensive bombardment which covered the district about the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Then towards two o'clock stupefying gas was liberated at Vermelles and drifted before the steady west wind towards the redoubt and Pit 8. The troops put on their smoke helmets and stood ready to move. The Midland Territorial Division was to be thrown against the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

This redoubt, a bean-shaped structure, was connected with the first line German trench by two trenches, that to the north being called "Little Willie," and that to the south "Big Willie." It covered a frontage of nearly a third of a mile, and was already saturated with British history. The front German line covered the pit which, with its colliery buildings, had been the scene of so prolonged a struggle. This redoubt was a formidable structure, and its defence had recently been strengthened by the addition of some companies of the Prussian Guard. It is hardly possible to describe in this, as in other cases, how terrible a problem the modern defensive war had become. Machine guns bristled in almost every possible hiding-place. Deep beneath the ground in gallery upon gallery of the mine workings the Germans waited, on the watch for their opportunity.

The Territorials went forward at the prearranged signal, the artillery lifting their range to interpose a protective barrage and cut off reserves. These men, who were really civilians with none of the fighting spirit which takes a deadly calm hold of the "Regular," spoke of the "joy" of battle. An officer is described as looking "as happy as if he was on a picnic." The men went through the labyrinthine passages, helping those who were hit, and occasionally resting from sheer fatigue. A badly wounded soldier crawled back to the dressing-station, but with the helmet of a Prussian Guard at his belt. He soon found himself in the centre of a stream of the wastage all making their way back as best they could. Some of the Lincolnshires and Leicesters had crossed the redoubt and were attacking the main trench beyond; and a party of them, having secured a number of machine guns, covered the advance of the rest. But despite numerous acts of gallantry, which seem really the chief part of the offensive—as they were certainly the part which would survive and win a page of history—little ground had been won. Part of the redoubt was in British hands, and part of the trenches beyond, but the objective had not been gained. Big Willie could not be taken, and on the following days renewed attempts to seize this important communication trench broke down.

Sir John French thus describes the gains of the Loos offensive: "The new front now leaves our own line at a point about 1,200 yards south-west of the southern edge of Auchy-lès-La Bassée, and runs thence, through the main trench of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, in an easterly direction, 400 yards south of the southern buildings of Fosse No. 8 to the south-western corner of the Quarries. We also hold the south-eastern corner of the Quarries, our trenches running thence south-east parallel to, and 400 yards from, the south-western edge of Cité St. Elie to a point 500 yards west of the north edge of Hulloch. The line then runs along the Lens-

La Bassée road to the Chalk Pit, 1,500 yards north of the highest point of Hill 70, and then turns south-west to a point 1,000 yards east of Loos Church, where it bends south-east to the north-west slope of Hill 70, and runs along the western slope of that hill, being south-west to a point 1,200 yards south of Loos Church, whence it runs due west back to our old line. The chord of the salient we have created in the enemy's line, measured along our old front, is 7,000 yards in length; the depth of the salient at the Chalk Pit is 3,200 yards."

From first to last the Allies lost some 70,000 men in the series of battles which achieved this success. As in Champagne, the manœuvre battle had not been rediscovered. The amount of ground gained was actually insignificant, though the gaining of it, in the new positional warfare, represented a series of terrible sieges. No sieges in history have been as terrible as these in which the besiegers *must* suffer a loss out of all proportion to the point to be taken. What were the causes of the failure? Some of them, the chief in fact, we have seen. An over-elaborate plan which turned deceit of the defenders into so fine an art that it was only achieved by the handicap of the attacking troops can hardly be commended. Only one thin line divided the British from open country and the manœuvre war, but the reserves were not at hand when required. They had been concentrated in three centres, one of which was so distant that the troops—they were the Guards, too—could hardly reach the front under any circumstances in time to be of use. The two other divisions would have been better divided up and the brigades dotted about more evenly over the area of attack. When the total main force of attack is only some 120,000 men, a brigade is sufficient to turn the day. The Guards could have been kept concentrated as a general mass of manœuvre. They could have been taken secretly by night and kept under cover as were the French in Champagne. The question of support was vital to the issue; and to have left the splendid Highland division about Lens with no energetic direction and no support for so long was simply to invite the counter-attack and ensure its success. It was a question of support, too, which made the lack of synchronisation between the British and the French attacks so serious.

The Loos offensive, then, failed of its designed effect. It gained a good deal of ground, dotted with various fortified points, all of which are inarticulate records of splendid deeds. It is known that the German Staff thought their hour had come and that they were to be driven out of the area. The archives at Thielt lay packed and ready to be sent farther into Belgium. But the summons never came.

Nor had the operations in Champagne achieved a decisive success. Upon the 8th October, with Tahure and Hill 196 in French hands, the Germans were yet upon Hill 199. Defended upon the south by the Courtine work, on the west by the ravine of La Goutte, and on the east by the trenches of Maisons de Champagne, it was apparently impregnable. Its particular strength depended upon a loop of light railway which ran from the east of Tahure right along the Courtine work, and supplied west, south, and east at need with reinforcements and ammunition. Almost from the first day of the offensive the French had been hammering at the work, but without success. Even when the Trapeze work fell, the position was very little weaker, being defended by numerous further quadrilateral defence works. The Courtine work had for nearly three weeks been under a converging fire, subjected to attacks by mining, and so on. The French facing eastward poured a hail of shell into its flank and rear; looking north, they mined up to it frontally;



but for all this the work did not fall until 24th October, when it had been under the pressure of every device of modern scientific warfare. On the 19th, General von Heeringen had skilfully delivered a counter-attack west of Auberive, towards the Reims-Châlons railway. A small force even succeeded in crossing the line, but they were killed to a man, and in a week the attack had been decisively checked.

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It may be taken to be about the high-water mark of the French achievement. The interest in the offensive had waned. The German lines still stood, unlike those on the Donajetz, which had been crossed by the Austro-Germans almost immediately after the opening of their offensive. The Germans were on the San a month after the attack upon the Donajetz line. It was this contrast, no doubt, which chilled the enthusiasm which had risen so gladly to meet the offensive at first. The Russians were moving in Galicia, but in spite of this the eyes of Europe were turned upon another little nation under the German heel. The Austro-Germans and Bulgars were pursuing their conquest of Servia methodically.

It is difficult to appraise correctly the gains of the Champagne offensive. That they were considerable was obvious. That they were insufficient wholly to occupy the German resources was equally clear; and on 28th October the French Ministry resigned, and this was the signal for a change of policy. The Allies were now belatedly to help heroic Servia. But the effect of such a decision was immediate. It meant that the French were to *acknowledge* the termination of their grand attempt to break the German lines or to pin the enemy to the Western front. That was a far graver thing than the mere failure of the attempt. For two days later Tahure Hill was once more in the hands of the Germans, and the chief gain of the French offensive was gone. It is clear that the French line had been lifted forward over a considerable distance. In square miles the extent was considerable. The Bazancourt-Grand Pré railway had been depreciated, since the new positions looked down upon it from too near a point to make it a safe means of communication for the Germans. But the greatest gain was that the French had proved completely how easily they could break the German steel wall, though the Allies had not yet mastered the problem of forcing their way through the whole defensive system. There can be no doubt that the Germans thought their front line impregnable. George Wegener, in his grandiose way, stated in the *Cologne Gazette* that when he asked whether the French could break through in Champagne—where it is certain the Germans knew the attack would fall—the officers answered unanimously: "Out of the question." That this was no verbal boast is shown by the fact that officers were taken prisoner by the French in their beds, and also by the far more instructive fact that the Germans had no sufficient reserves at hand, and had made no real preparation for such an attack. In the main they were right, though not so correct as they thought, for the facts show that they held the front line alone to be impregnable, and it was carried almost at a bound.

There is abundant evidence that the bombardment wrought terrible havoc among the Germans; but the Kaiser's son, Oscar, writing only a few days before the attack was loosed, seemed to have no comprehension of the possibilities in view. It is for this reason presumably that, as the attack lengthened out, there was need to reassure the German people, and the more serious military critics set about warning their countrymen that there might be worse still in store. And it is for this reason probably that the Germans, once they regained confidence that they were

not in immediate peril of being driven to the Rhine, began to eulogise the splendour of the French attack. Indeed all eulogies were deserved. The offensive had been prepared with infinite patience and skill. General Castelnau, who was in command here, was an old friend and trusted colleague of the Generalissimo. A devout Catholic and a Royalist, his advancement had been slow until 1906. Royalists and Catholics have to work against a handicap in France. But Castelnau's quality was too great to be suppressed. In 1896, ten years before he became a general, he was at the General Staff controlling those problems of organisation and mobilisation in which his genius found fullest play. A year before the war he became Joffre's right-hand man. His old piercing eyes, his strong face and broad brow, show brain power, daring, and decision—surely the three most essential qualities of a successful general. After the defeat of the Battle of Morhange he had charge of the army which so successfully defended Nancy and robbed the Kaiser of his limelight plot to make a triumphal entry.

And, indeed, Castelnau had achieved a great success. The offensive had taken some 25,000 prisoners, with many wounded Germans, numerous guns of the field type and heavy order, and huge quantities of material. About one hundred German battalions had been holding the Champagne front at the beginning of the offensive. With their full complements these may have amounted to about 120,000 men, or slightly less. Before the offensive was over almost exactly that number of fresh troops had been thrown into the *mêlée*; and the French Staff calculated that the Germans had lost in all about 140,000 men. That was a very significant stimulus to the normal wastage. If they lost so many upon that front, what must their total have been for the month when they were attacking at Riga, being attacked on other sections of the Western front, and in Galicia? The wastage was the most significant factor of the war. By it rose and fell the fortunes of the belligerents; and in causing Germany to lose so many men the Allies had scored a great success.

But why did the offensive not achieve the same success as that upon the Donajetz? The difference between the two attacks was extraordinary. The fortified line of the Donajetz was attacked towards the end of April, and the Germans succeeded in getting the Russian line in motion and kept the manœuvre war in being until the end of September. For practically five months they forced the Russians to fall back, abandoning more and more of their territory. There is clearly a point of difference here which cannot be ignored. Territory of itself means little. It takes its value from the fate of the armies defending it. A retreat comparable to that of the Russians, maintained for so long a time, forced over such a stretch of territory, could have meant nothing but final, absolute, and immediate defeat of Germany. For Russia, on the other hand, her long retreat uncovered no vital centres and sacrificed no vital interests. She but played her traditional game of trying to break a pretentious invader upon the inhospitable country. She could force him to pay a price for each mile of advance, and the price would be much greater than the immediate toll of killed and wounded. It would include the difficulties and handicaps of supply in a country so devoid of communications; it would include the lives which would be forfeited to the inclemencies of the winter weather in such country. The antecedent conditions, therefore, predisposed to the respective results. The Germans dare not give up their line save under the bitterest pressure. The Russians lost little, and made a positive gain by abandoning their territory to the enemy. Naturally they did not wish to do so, but driven to choose between



annihilation and territory, they gave up the latter. Russia's greatest loss was the abandoned material. For the Germans to have fallen back would have been to escape one peril to fall into a worse.

The Russians were clearly weaker on the Donajetz. So much must be admitted; and the reason is not far to seek. They lacked munitions. They had started under a remarkable handicap in this way, and had never recovered. General Dimitrieff, who held the front which was broken, had not fortified his line in the way the Champagne district was fortified. After the first line there seem to have been no alternative positions; and there were no machine-gun emplacements because the supply of machine guns was not sufficiently great. Further, the Russians lacked heavy guns, and the Germans brought against them an extraordinary accumulation. They could not resist. They had not the protection afforded by the elaborate burrows on the West; and, under so terrible a bombardment as that of the last days of April and the beginning of May, certain units were literally annihilated. The lines were not so defensible as in Champagne. At one point the entrenchments had to enter the Carpathian foothills, and it was about the junction of the plain and rising ground that the breach was made.

Further, the Germans had developed this system of defensive warfare almost to its utmost capacity, and it had an obvious strength against attack. The offensive proved that no steel wall was invulnerable. It could be wiped away. But for such a result every defensive work, every main trench, every parapet or fortified gun emplacement, must be accurately located. Maps must record every field or obstacle of wire. The ranges must be known accurately; and then everything was a foregone conclusion. And yet, as we have seen, defensive works did escape destruction in the bombardment. Only upon a line of some extent was it of any use to attempt to break through, and yet sixteen miles, or say 28,000 yards, present a vast number of fortified details which must be beaten to dust or they will in the end not only exact a fearful toll of lives, but may even hold up the advance at its critical stages. When the French had broken through the first German line they were confronted by a second which could not be accurately located.

The true reason of the French failure or desistance from pressing the advance as it ought to have been pressed to achieve victory or afford protection to other theatres of the war seems to have been the failure in the supply of artillery. The bombardment had been continued so long that when the second line was in view there was no comparable supply at hand for it. The Germans from the neighbouring sections had been thrown into the *mêlée*, and such was the French loss that unless the day were to turn to a decisive victory, it seemed imprudent to force it. Yet the plain fact was that the victory was merely tactical. Splendid as was the French achievement, the victory left the friends of the Allies a little dismayed. They had shot their bolt and the Germans remained still in France, and with full liberty to urge an offensive elsewhere. The unspoken question upon the lips of many was: "Can the Allies ever break through? Is it true, as the Germans say, that their steel wall is impregnable?"

Consolation could only be sought in the fact that the attrition of the German armies would at length reach a point when the forces apportioned to the defence of the line would be inadequate to resist an even more terrible bombardment and an even more vigorous attack. But at the moment this was cold comfort.

## II. THE CONQUEST OF SERVIA.

THE inception of the Austro-German campaign in Servia really dates from the fall of Brest-Litovsk on 25th August, when the army group of Marshal von Mackensen began to melt away from the Russian theatre of the war to be accumulated upon the Austro-Servian frontier, with the phalanx which had made a breach in the Donajetz line and driven the Russians out of Galicia. Mackensen's name continued to appear in the German *communiqués*; but he had relinquished command, and the units began to make their appearance upon other parts of the front. Mackensen himself seems to have gone to Galicia to assist in directing the attempts to force the line of the Styr. But it is clear that, while he had been battering his way through to Brest, the General Staff had been maturing their plan, and, when the fall of Brest showed that still another attempt to capture a considerable part of the Russian armies had failed, the machine was set in motion against Servia.

The Austro-German troops were of poor quality. Indeed, such was their inferiority to the Serbs that Marshal Putnik was betrayed into maintaining his line too far north until the Bulgars had seized the strategic key to the position. Mackensen was in supreme command, and he had with him the Austro-Hungarian army of General Kövess von Kövesshaza and the army of General von Gallwitz. He had with him, too, the vast accumulation of artillery which had proved its use already as an irresistible spearhead. The Serbs were undaunted at the prospect of meeting the redoubtable Germans, and they were confident of dealing with them as they had dealt with the Austrians before on three separate occasions.

The position on this occasion was, however, vastly different. The Bulgars had been mobilised for some time, and although on 17th August the Bulgarian Premier informed the American press that they were negotiating with both sides and were prepared to enter the war when they had received guarantees that their claims in Servia and Macedonia would be satisfied, they had already signed a treaty on 17th July with the Turco-Germans. They continued to throw dust in the eyes of the Allies until, on 3rd October, Russia sent an ultimatum demanding the dismissal of the German officers who had appeared in Bulgaria, and a complete breach with the enemies of the Slav race. But, with many diplomatic shrugs of the shoulders, M. Radoslavov, the Bulgarian Premier, had replied that he could not well dismiss the German officers who were not there; and he also made a new protest of innocence. But the ink was not yet dry on his signature, agreeing to enter the war on the 15th on the side of Germany. He seems to have been the only prominent Minister whom Ferdinand could trick or persuade into agreeing with him. The patriotic representatives, who had been received by the King, had been blunt even to rudeness in their warnings to him. One had advised him to have a care for his head. The King replied that he could look after his own head. Another, almost equally pointed, reminded him that he was betraying the country. The King, however, was convinced that the Kaiser was going to win, and that very soon. It was, to his type of mind, a most prudent form of speculation in politics. A dreamer, he saw the empire which fate had given him, in desire but not in fact, within his grasp. The die was cast. In face of all opposition, threats, entreaties, and warnings, the King had determined to steer his own course. And his refusal to agree to the Russian demands showed that he meant to turn his back upon the



nation which had delivered his kingdom from the Turks. The indignation among Bulgars abroad was very great. One, the distinguished general, Dimitrieff, was fighting upon the Russian side in Galicia ; and, when it became clear that the King meant to take part against the nation which had delivered the Bulgar race from the tyrannous misrule of the Turk, he sent back his decorations and refused to wear them any longer. The famous Bulgar generals also very clearly signified their disapprobation, and refused to take command. The patriots who had shown themselves so fearless soon found themselves under duress.

This, of course, only became known little by little. And the events were accompanied by others which appeared to some extent to counterbalance them. Thus, when Bulgaria mobilised on 19th September, the day after the fall of Vilna, this was followed by the Greek mobilisation, only four days later. King Constantine had reluctantly recalled Venizelos in the last week of August ; and this fact, coupled with the Greek mobilisation, seemed to show that the Greeks were prepared to support Servia in case of attack. Indeed, it later became known that Venizelos had so declared to the British in asking for help. He guaranteed to send Greek troops if the Allies would send 150,000. This was agreed to, and the Allies were therefore invited to land at Salonika and use the port as a base. The Greek Government raised a formal protest as a neutral, but with the approval of Venizelos the Allies were satisfied as to their support. All this aroused a feeling of safety among the friends of Servia. But events fell out very rapidly afterwards. On 5th October General Bailloud's French division (156th) from Gallipoli, the 113th Brigade from France, and the 10th (Irish) Division from Gallipoli began to arrive. The force was small to begin with, but it was to be swelled every day until it had reached the promised dimensions. But, on the same day, Venizelos made a speech in the chamber suggesting that he would be in favour of going to the assistance of Servia if she were to be attacked ; and at once King Constantine informed him that he could not follow out this policy to the end. The Premier resigned.

At a stroke the whole situation was changed. What could the King mean, if not that he did not feel justified in helping Servia if this committed him to taking sides against Germany ? And as assistance could not be given otherwise, it was clear that the King did not mean to fulfil his treaty obligations. That was the position ; and as the Allied force, already accumulating, had been sent on the assumption that they were to form but part of the expeditionary force for the assistance of the Serbs, they were in a difficult position. They had been invited by a minister who was now out of power, and they had on their flank a mobilised army. It had no great fighting reputation, it is true, but it was of considerable size and was capable of exercising a threat against the Allies. The next day the Austro-Germans opened the campaign on the whole of the Danube-Drina front. Three days later the British General Staff pronounced against intervention in the Balkans. What precisely happened, then, is difficult to say. The Government seems to have fallen back upon the thoroughly British rule of when in doubt do nothing.

On 12th October the Premier of the new Greek Government, M. Zaimis, announced King Constantine's policy. Servia had appealed to Greece against the threatened attack by Bulgaria, summoning her under the terms of their treaty to give assistance. M. Zaimis stated that the *casus fœderis* had not arisen, as the treaty of 1913 was purely Balkan in character. Greece was therefore unable to go to Servia's assistance.



The Serbian Campaign.



Bulgaria declared war on 14th October, and M. Delcassé, the famous French Foreign Minister, resigned. If, as was suggested at the time, this German campaign in Servia was really a political coup to distract and disturb the Allies, it certainly succeeded. Sir Edward Carson in England followed Delcassé, and on 28th October the French Ministry resigned. As a result of the formation of the new Cabinet General Joffre appeared in London and had a number of meetings with the War Council and the Cabinet. He succeeded in persuading them, on the 29th, that what had been too late on the 9th was not too late three weeks later! When the Franco-British troops landed in early October it was already too late.

Meanwhile Mackensen had opened the campaign. His armies were deployed along the Drina, Save, and Danube. Kövess's army lay from the Drina to the east of Belgrade, Gallwitz occupying the eastern sector to Orsova. In front of them, across the Danube, lay the 1st Servian Army of Mishitch and the 3rd of Yourashitch. The 2nd Army (Stepanovitch) covered the Bulgarian frontier. Admiral Troubridge was with a British naval detachment in Belgrade, and the naval guns gave a good account of themselves. But the three rivers were crossed at various points on the first day of the campaign. It must be remembered that an army can cause a great deal of trouble without striking a single blow. By standing fully mobilised against points of the highest strategical value it can compel an army to mass forces in front of it. And this was the effect of the Bulgar concentration on the Servian frontier. The troops were massed in two critical areas. Bojadiev's army lay near the Timok valley, which separates Rumania from Bulgaria; and Teodorov's army lined the frontier which looks to Uskub and the west of Servia. The Servian front is very long, and it stood with at least three-quarters exposed to a potential enemy. Under these circumstances, the Servian commander could do no less than leave covering troops upon the vital parts of his frontier from which attack might come. His main force to resist the Austro-German advance was diminished by so much. Yourashitch's army had to extend its right to cover the Lower Timok, and Stepanovitch had to cover Nish, Vranja, Uskub, and the Vardar, up which Allied reinforcements must make their way.

The defence of the Danube line was maintained most valiantly against the Germans of Gallwitz's army. Kövess's Austro-Hungarian Army, on the Save and Drina, also had a stiffening of German troops. Gallwitz attempted crossings at Semendria and Bazias, but it was three days before he secured the crossings at the latter place and four before he entered Semendria. The attack upon the whole line was dependent upon success at the critical points. But Belgrade, though submitted to a storm from the massed artillery, was not entered until the third day, and, even then, only at the cost of a struggle through the streets. Every corner became a death-trap for the advancing enemy, and the losses on this small section of the battle front alone were very heavy. Mackensen must have congratulated himself that, after all, his troops were the scourings of every part of the main battle fronts, and that he had depended upon the preponderance of heavy artillery.

The plan was working, but slowly, and at great cost. In these circumstances, the ally of the Germanic Empires was called upon to help. So far the Bulgars had kept out. Ferdinand was far too shrewd to accept the whole burden of conquering the Serbs for the Germans. His disposition of forces was of great value to them; and it had the extraordinary advantage that if the Germans had miscalculated and had sent insufficient forces to make headway against the Serbs, Ferdinand could

refrain from taking any part altogether, and at the end say that he had never intended to take a part. But now that the Austrians and Germans had shown that they really meant to accept the full risk of the campaign, the Bulgars crossed the frontier in the Timok valley. There was still no declaration of war, and the crossing of the frontier did not commit the Bulgars to very much. And their first steps were taken with an eye to withdraw in case of need. It is probable that the Bulgars had thoroughly sounded the Greeks before making their plans with the Germans; and on the following day the Greeks declined to fulfil their treaty obligations to Servia.

On the 14th the Bulgars formally declared war against the Serbs, having made sure that the Greeks did not mean to offer any opposition to them. The whole orientation of the Servian campaign was immediately changed. The Allies, who had landed on the assumption that they were to be simply a reinforcement of the Greek counter-attack, found themselves faced with the necessity of choosing between taking over a liability three times as large as they had bargained for or else evacuating Greece altogether. In the former case, they must contemplate making war on a great scale in a foreign country with doubtful friends in force about the main base, with only a single-line railway as the sole source of supply, and the winter approaching.

The Serbs were, however, in far worse plight; and this probably determined the Allies to stand their ground. If they had viewed the campaign in a purely military light, it is highly improbable that they should have come to this decision. For it is quite clear that they could not hope to accumulate troops to the extent required in the time allowed to them. They must have appreciated the fact that the campaign would probably be decided before they had reached the dimensions necessary to have any real effect upon it. But the position of the Serbs became critical immediately the Bulgars began hostilities against them and the Greeks refused to stand by their word. Their army could not have reached a total of much more than 250,000. The Germans estimated it at less. Against them they had ranged a force of Austro-Germans of between 300,000 and 400,000. The Bulgars must have mustered against the Serbs about 300,000 first-rate troops, fired with the memory of their defeats at the hands of the Serbs and Greeks, and trained on the German model.

Servia had, at this moment, an enemy actually operating on about two-thirds of her frontier. When the Bulgars began operations, the Serbs found themselves in a sort of sickle; and the campaign was the movement of that sickle towards the south-west. But there were points which had to be held if the Servian struggle were not to degenerate into a rout. It is almost certain that if the Serbs had had to confront the Austrians and Germans alone, they would have been able to deal with them quite as faithfully as they had dealt with the Austrians on two former occasions. They would have retired fighting to the mountains, and there have met the invader with one of the surprise strokes which such country favours. Even attacked upon two fronts, their position was not at all hopeless for a people so splendidly brave, led by a first-rate strategist who knew his country as well as Hindenburg his lakes and marshes. But the addition of the Bulgars to the ranks of the enemy meant that the natural line of supply and remunitionment was liable to be cut at a moment's notice, and that even the natural line of retreat in case of extremity was open to attack.

Indeed, the history of the campaign bears out this consideration. There was probably nothing more heroic in the whole war than the splendid resistance of this



race of born fighters ; and the only military successes attained were those of the Bulgars, who fought an almost faultless campaign with a sure knowledge of where the vulnerable centres lay. Bojadiev's 1st Army attacked the Negotin-Pirot line. Both these points are in the Timok valley, and the aim of the operations in this quarter was to lighten the task of the Austro-Germans who were attempting to force their way across the whole length of the Save and Danube. Pirot is a station on the Nish-Sofia railway, which is the avenue of approach to Turkey and the prime object of the campaign. But the mere seizing of Pirot would have been of little worth if the railway line had not been subjected to a threat from the flank on the north. Negotin itself lies upon a branch line from Nish which runs up the Timok valley parallel to the line of the Bulgar advance.

But, in effect, this advance was completely overshadowed by the Bulgar threat farther south. General Teodorov was moving against the Uskub-Veles section of the Serb frontier. These two towns were the key to the whole position. Uskub is a railway junction which communicates with Nish, Salonika, and, more important still, Mitrovitza. The line to Mitrovitza follows the only road to Novi Bazar. Up this valley any army which meant to threaten the Servian rear must march. There was no other avenue of approach from the south. The country is a tangle of hills with a bare minimum of good roads, and is therefore easily defensible by an armed force of even small dimensions. The road and rail from Uskub must be denied the enemy if the Serb rear was to be immune from attack. This narrowed down to the preservation of the narrow neck at Katchanik, a pass through the mountains which forbade the approach from the south along the Uskub-Mitrovitza railway line.

Moreover, another road from Uskub turned almost due west to Tetovo (or Kalandele), which lay on the only road from Macedonia. The Tetovo road was further the only means of connection between the Allies and the Serbs, unless they could take and hold Uskub. It was, therefore, the only road along which the Serbs could be supplied and munitioned. Veles was of an importance second only to that of Uskub. Veles was, in fact, the key of Uskub ; and an enemy installed at Veles could make the tenure of Uskub almost impossible. Uskub, itself, is almost surrounded by hill country. It lies a little west of Veles, which is almost due south of the town of Kumanovo. These three towns make a sort of triangle. Uskub is the apex to the west, and a road runs from Veles cutting the Kumanovo side east of Uskub. Moreover this road runs through good country for marching, and is protected from the east by hill country. It will thus be seen that any one holding Uskub must also hold Veles, or the tenancy of the former town would be at the mercy of the forces at the latter.

The Bulgar forces were not only operating upon these lines. They made their thrust along the whole length of the Serb front as far south as Valandovo (in the Vardar valley), where the Allies were slowly gathering. The Franco-British troops were put under the supreme command of General Sarraill, who had so brilliantly defended Verdun against the attacks of the Crown Prince's army. He was a bold and experienced general, but his problem was almost beyond solution from the first. The Serbs wished him to send his troops north to take part in the fighting against the Bulgars. But if he had done so, his little force would almost certainly have shared the fate of the Serbs.

The Serbs had desired to attack the Bulgars when they first began to mobilise, but had not done so at the request of the Allies. It is difficult to think that any-

thing that the Allies could have done would have prevailed upon the Bulgars either to keep out of the fighting or to take their side. But the Serbs knew full well that the mobilisation boded ill for them, and if they had attacked before the Bulgars had completely mobilised it is probable the whole history of the campaign would have been different. The Allies have certainly suffered the handicap of standing for the right in this campaign, and this is not the least significant instance in which it turned to a terrible disadvantage.

The Serbs held most securely and most easily the advanced part of their northern front. Marshal Putnik, apparently, had determined to prevent the junction of the Austro-Germans and Bulgars as long as possible. The campaign was eight days old before the enemy had succeeded in storming Pozharevatz, although the town lies but a few miles from the Danube, a little way east of Semendria. On the same day the Bulgars made a sudden attack upon the Allies at Valandovo, but were repulsed. The next day Teodorov's army gained the first significant success of the campaign by the capture of Vrania on the Nish-Uskub railway, and the capture of Egri Palanka which lies over the Servian frontier in the direction of Uskub.

Two days later the Allies made another attempt to enlist the help of Greece. She was, of course, bound in honour, if not in actual fact, by the treaty; but as she had refused to consider herself bound, the Allies strove to enlist her interests. They now offered her Cyprus in exchange for the help she was really bound to give the Serbs at any cost. But, on the 21st, the new Greek Ministry refused, and the offer was withdrawn.

The Austrians, on the 16th, were able to enter Obrenovatz, on the Save. This fact is but another proof of the ease with which the Serbs were able to hold their northern enemy. On the same day the fighting about Vrania assumed a most desperate character. Indeed, although the Bulgars had made this important coup, they were not able to issue from the town either north or south to any extent for some time. To the north they were held until after the capture of Nish. On 20th October the Bulgars secured an even more important success by the capture of Veles. This prepared the way for the capture of Uskub, and definitely shut off the Allies from any advance to the north. The following day they pressed their advantage by seizing the other end of the base of the triangle of which Uskub forms the apex—Kumanovo. The advance was being made in an orderly fashion. An attack made on this day against the Allies was beaten off.

The following day, the 22nd, the Bulgars occupied Uskub. This was the most important stroke of the Servian campaign, and again it fell to the Bulgars and not to the Germans. The Austrians, on this day, at length took Shabatz, on the Save. The Serbs were, meanwhile, concentrating for a counter-attack, and upon the 25th they recaptured Veles. The Bulgars were driven out and compelled to retire to the east. Meanwhile the Austrians and Germans were making headway, though not at the speed which had been predicted. Indeed the slowness of the advance was attracting the attention of military students. On the 26th, however, the Austro-German armies were able to join hands with the Bulgars at Liubichevatz, on the Danube. It had taken the four armies just three weeks to force the Serbs out of this corner of their territory. The next day the Serbs followed up their success in the south by the capture of Uskub, and the Bulgars fell back to Istip. In spite of this they struck across country from Kumanovo and captured the Katchanik pass. It was of course clear that they could not continue to hold it unless they held



Uskub, and, accordingly, they advanced once more in the south and retook Veles. On the same day, however, the French took Strumnitza station, and the 57th and 122nd Divisions were at Krivolak, some distance to the south. The Irish troops under General Mahon covered the French right flank at this time. The Bulgars marched south and attempted to throw the Allies out of Krivolak. They were unsuccessful. But towards the north the Bulgars and Austro-Germans were making headway, and on the first day of November they had reached the chief Servian arsenal, Kragujevatz.

Yet an examination of the enemy position shows how slow had been the advance. Three weeks had passed since the Austro-Germans had crossed the Danube and begun their organised invasion. Yet the line which marked the front lay still about Valievo and Kragujevatz, and this was the most advanced section of their front. In the north-eastern corner of the country, towards Orsova, the enemy had not advanced a third of that distance south. It would have been better if the Serbs had allowed the Austrians and Germans to advance more rapidly in this direction and had kept open the avenue which joined them to the Allies and thereby offered supplies and ammunition. The Allies are not guiltless in this regard. For surely it would have been fairer to the Serbs to have held out no hopes of military assistance, and to have concentrated their efforts upon supplying them from the south-west, than to have led them to prejudice their best interests by offering them what was, at best, a merely illusory help.

It was at this point that the enemy began to advance with greater rapidity. This is a significant fact, since it was at this time only that the Austrians and Germans began to approach the middle of Servia, which was the centre of their resistance. Already the enemy had been made to pay heavily for the advance he had made. But he was only now approaching the central tangle of mountain country which makes up the special character of Servia. South of the valley of the Western Morava, and west of the Vardar valley, the highland country reigns supreme in all its lawless strength. Roads make a timid attempt to cope with it, but touch no more than the outer fringes. A road makes a slight curve southwards from the Western Morava valley on the west and returns to it on the east. There is the road from Uskub which cuts it diagonally up to Novi Bazar. This same road has a finger which dips down to Prisrend. But apart from these there are no places where the mountain country relaxes its hold until we reach the Albanian coast, with the single exception of the plateau of Kossovo, which lies east of Ipek and north of Prisrend.

In country such as this all the odds should have been on these hardy mountaineers, who knew it thoroughly and were habituated to its hardships in all weathers. Moreover, mountain fighting takes on its own peculiar colour, and lays an additional strain upon the initiative of individual soldiers. The friends of Servia, therefore, looked to see the enemy meet with even sterner resistance on reaching the mountain heart of the country. The very opposite took place; for the Austro-Germans, who had made headway so slowly until now, began to advance much more as they had been expected to advance at the beginning. *The Serbs were running out of ammunition*, and were compelled to pay the penalty. Day by day the advance became more rapid, and more prisoners were taken, so that between 1st and 10th November, although the line of advance lay through this crumpled tangle of mountains, the enemy made a greater advance than in the preceding three weeks.

Veles, besides commanding Uskub, was at the head of the road which ran down

into Macedonia to Monastir ; and the Bulgars were no sooner established at Uskub than they began to push their front down into Macedonia. Their purpose was to sever all connection between the Allies and Serbs. The road to Monastir is commanded like the road to Mitrovitz by a pass, which being held, the road is rendered impassable. This pass is called the Babuna Pass ; and the Serbs held it securely at this time. Slightly to the north the little town of Isvor lies, and upon this the Bulgars made a sudden attack on 2nd November, and captured it. Two days later the town seems to have fallen into the hands of the Serbs once more.

But by this time the enemy had been pushing his advance successfully in quarters which were more immediately important. They had pushed south from Kragujevatz to Parachin, an advance in three days nearly half the distance which had taken them twenty-four days to accomplish. Parachin lies near the junction of the railway from Ushitza and the Belgrade-Nish line. The Danube had, by this time, been opened for traffic between the Austro-Germans and the Bulgars ; and the latter, remunitioned, had been able to press their advance towards Nish with great speed. The struggle for the temporary capital was not without incident ; and it was taken after many attempts had been made, and after the Bulgars had lost heavily. It was not only the temporary capital—that might apply to any town which the Serbs decided so to employ—but it was the junction which was essential for the Germans to secure before they could use the railway to Constantinople, which was one of the main objects of the campaign. The Serbs determined to delay the enemy as long as they could if they were unable to cheat them of their prey altogether. The Bulgars attempted to approach the town from the north-east and south. On the south they were securely held, the Serbs striking with great force in this direction in order to keep the Bulgars from securing a point from which they could strike up to their rear, and thereby envelop them. On the east a first success by the Bulgars was visited by a heavy blow, and they were driven back. The same thing happened on the north. The Bulgars advanced rashly, only to be thrown back by a violent counter-stroke.

But on 3rd November the Serbs began to withdraw in this neighbourhood. The archives had been removed for some time to Mitrovitz. And on 4th November the Bulgars entered the town triumphantly. The railway was not, however, in the hands of the enemy altogether. It was held by them, but it had been methodically destroyed by the retreating Serbs. The track of a railway can never be wholly destroyed ; but in country such as Serbia every tunnel and cutting can be blown up, every bridge destroyed, and sufficient damage done to prevent the line being of any real use for some time. As a matter of fact, the line was not *announced* clear until the end of the month, and it is not quite certain that even then it was fully open for traffic. On the day that Nish fell Lord Kitchener left England to visit and report upon the whole Eastern theatre of the war. It was yet three days before the Austro-Germans reached Krushevatz, on the railway line to Ushitza.

The enemy now began to enter the very heart of Servia. He had left the last piece of railway, and his artillery could not be of much use to him in country which is almost trackless. But the Bulgars had begun to press in the Katchanik direction, and about the pass numerous bloody battles took place. At the same time they marched due west and captured Tetovo, or Kalkandele. The importance of this



town has already been pointed out. It lay at the head of the road from Monastir and Macedonia. By capturing the town the Bulgars divided the Serbs of Macedonia from the main army to the north. They thereby cut off also the Allies from the Servian main army, and with this cut off all chance of the Allies sending them supplies and munitions. The avenue which connected the main army with the Allies and the south had for some time been in a precarious state. Albanian irregulars had crossed the border and attacked the Serb forces near Tetovo; and although they were dispersed, they engaged a certain force of badly needed troops, and they rendered communications insecure.

It was while the struggle for Tetovo was proceeding that the French advanced once more towards Veles and secured Gradsko. The town, which had a station on the Nish-Salonika railway, was at the head of the road from Prilep. In this town centre two roads to Monastir, and while Gradsko is held no security can be enjoyed by a force at Prilep. The occupation of Gradsko was, therefore, a double disadvantage; but this threat to the left rear of the Bulgar troops was too remote to give the Serbs efficient relief. Meanwhile the struggle for Tetovo had been proceeding, and two days after the capture of Gradsko the town fell into Servian hands once more. The fact that Tetovo was thus retaken is another evidence of the skilful leading of the Serbs. Marshal Putnik did not intend to allow points of such tactical importance to fall into the hands of the enemy until it could no longer be prevented. The Austrians and Germans were met almost wholly by rearguard fights, though these were of the utmost stubbornness, and an Austrian correspondent pointed out that the retreating Serbs left few feathers behind. The Serb transport moved westward and south-westward in the rear of the army, and at the beginning of the enemy main attack the artillery was invariably withdrawn, so that all chance of it falling into the hands of the enemy might be obviated. Everywhere the retreat, though forced, was orderly.

The Bulgars in mid-November took Krushevo, and pressed forward towards Prilep. Monastir, as we have seen, is the centre of several roads. One runs almost due north to Tetovo; another runs north-east to Prilep and Veles. When pushing west to Tetovo, the Bulgars had covered most of the country between these two roads. Krushevo is the name of a small village some twenty-five miles north of Monastir, and about ten miles east of the Tetovo road. Between Krushevo and Prilep the Bulgar front sagged down towards Monastir. The capture of Prilep would have wholly turned the Serb position in the Babuna Pass, which commands the Monastir-Prilep road farther north. The consequence was that the Serbs were led to strike in the Babuna region, and there, on 15th November, they secured a distinct success. But the Bulgars had again seized possession of Tetovo, and they were making great efforts to overrun the whole Babuna position. On 16th November, indeed, they captured Prilep, but attempting to move against the French established on the river Tchernia they were thrown back, the "75's" doing great damage. But the French were unable to effect a junction with the remnant of the Serbs in Southern Macedonia.

Meanwhile the Austro-Germans were pressing on as quickly as their weakened forces would allow. The day after the Bulgars took Prilep they were threatening Mitrovitza. Three days later they had taken Novi Bazar. The Serbs had now been pushed back from the bulk of their country. Winter had set in. The cold in the mountains was extreme, and caused the Austro-Germans great sufferings.

The peaks were covered with snow. In the valleys floods were formed of the thawed snow and swollen rivers. The retreating Serbs destroyed every bridge, and thereby cast as much trouble upon the shoulders of the invaders as possible. Very little was heard of the difficulties of the advance and the sufferings and loss of the soldiers. "The pursuit continues calmly" was the form of the German *communiqués*; and since the civilian males were made to swell the list of captures, an imposing total of prisoners began to grow up.

Meanwhile the Allies had been attempting to discover what exactly the Greek attitude signified. Discussions had taken place in Greece which regarded the chances of a Serb retreat on to Greek territory. The question was mooted whether, in that case, the Greek Government would disarm and intern them. This ominous question was far too important to be neglected. The Serbs were allies, and if they interned the Serbs, why not British and French too? It was fairly evident that the obligations of neutrality imposed such action upon the Greeks. But in inviting the Allies to land troops, the Greeks had already abandoned true neutrality. Even if they had done too little for honour, they had done too much for neutrality. M. Denys Cochin, an old man now, who had made no appearance in French politics for years, had accepted office in the new French Ministry. The French have long been popular in Greece, and M. Cochin was probably the most popular Frenchman in Athens. He was sent thither to ascertain what standpoint the Greeks meant to adopt in case the Allies fell back upon Greek territory. He was received in Athens with great enthusiasm, and the king gave him an audience which seemed all that could be desired. The following day (Nov. 19th) the Allies proclaimed a "peaceful blockade" of Greece. Ships were detained in Allied ports. Cables were stopped at Allied stations, and so on. Whether from the visit of M. Cochin or from the "peaceful blockade," the atmosphere seemed a little clearer, and some assurances were given by Greece which she promptly announced to be acceptable. But the fact was that for a long time no real satisfaction was obtained from Greece. Vague protestations were of no value where detail meant everything. Lord Kitchener, two days after the visit of M. Cochin, was received by the king, and he was reported to have reminded the king of our increasing resources in man power and Germany's decreasing numbers. He is said to have summed up the situation as a political *coup*. But the king was a soldier, and a popular soldier, who was enamoured of German methods.

The Austro-Germans were now hammering at the Kossovo plateau. They had made one attempt upon it which had proved a fiasco. The keys to the plateau are the towns Mitrovitza and Prishtina. On 23rd November both towns, after the most terrible fighting, fell into the enemy hands; and with the retreat from the Kossovo plateau, Serbia was almost completely evacuated by the Serbs. They fell back into Montenegro and Albania. The capital had already been removed to Scutari. The pressure of the enemy went on unceasingly, and on the last day of the month Prisrend, on the borders of Albania, fell. The Serbs had now only a footing in their country at Monastir, and along a triangular strip which rested against the boundary of mid-Albania. On 3rd December Monastir, after a stout defence, fell to the Bulgars, and the conquest of Serbia was complete.

The Servian operations had occupied the enemy some two months. With every advantage as to position and opportunity—it will be remembered that the Allies had forbidden the Serbs to attack the Bulgars until the latter attacked them



—with odds of between two and three to one, with a huge battering ram of artillery of all calibres, with a unity of direction which obviated all the fatal vacillation of the Allies, it had yet taken Mackensen two months to clear the country. He left it at the end with a wound. He left with nothing else. He could not be said to have secured laurels by so troublesome a conquest. He was reported to have expostulated with the Bulgars on their brutality. Whether he did or not, the brutality was evident enough. Apart from this and an unreliable tone in their *communiqués*, the Bulgars fought an exceedingly well directed campaign.

The Allies fought several battles with the Bulgars, and succeeded in impressing the enemy with a certain respect for their artillery, if not for their own fighting capacity. Sarrail was hampered from the outset by lack of the force with which to cope with the situation. No position could have been more ignominious than his. When the Serbs fell back to the south of Macedonia, and his vigorous efforts to effect a junction with them and so secure their retreat had failed, he was compelled to withdraw his position to the right of the Tchernia; and even there he was left in a critical position by the advance of the Bulgars to the southernmost point of his left flank. With the Serbs falling back into Albania and Montenegro, he was left to the mercy of his enemies, holding a position which necessitated a converging line of retreat, and the task of withdrawing his two divisions from Macedonia under persistent Bulgarian pressure. Indeed, the Allied share of the campaign exhibited the Alliance at its very worst, and gained them no prestige in the Balkans. They had embarked on the campaign without sufficient thought. The troops were not provided with even *necessary* transport. And they continued to debate on the question of intervention when it was already too late to help, and while the Greeks were taking up a threatening attitude at their rear.

The heroic Serbs escaped as best they might through Albania. Their path lay through inhospitable country, and the bitter weather would have daunted any but the stoutest hearts; but they lived to fight again. And meanwhile there were still lower depths which the Allies must touch before the turn of the tide.

### III. THE CAPITULATION OF MONTENEGRO.

By the end of November the conquest of Serbia was practically complete. The ruthless sickle of the enemy had been drawn across the country, and nothing escaped which remained in its path. Thousands of soldiers and refugees who fled through the hills, cold and starving, at length fell in front of it. Monastir fell on 3rd December, and speculation was rife as to the use which would be found for the armies of the enemy. Sarrail had fallen back into Greece; and he set about fortifying the entrenched camp of Salonika. The enemy meanwhile looked over the fence, and thought the things he dared not undertake. The Germans had no room in their plans for any further excursions if they involved any considerable force. Towards the end of the year the Russians began an offensive in Bukovina and Eastern Galicia, which called for vigorous resistance; and Czernowitz at one time looked so near falling that Mackensen, who had recently established his headquarters there, was forced to withdraw. A German and Bulgarian force made an attempt to debouch from the Strumnitza valley, cut off the British troops, and press on to Salonika;

but in the heavy battle of 6th to 8th December they were held off, and the troops were withdrawn into Greece, though after suffering considerable loss. The Bulgars halted on the Greek frontier. With Austria and Germany thus actively engaged, and all the troops on the Greek frontier worn out with the campaign and the bitter weather, there was little chance of any offensive which might embroil them with Greece, and did not promise much profit in any case.

Salonika, therefore, slept fairly soundly, and the Allied soldiers gave themselves up to gymkhanas to keep themselves occupied. But the enemy sickle which had cleared Serbia so thoroughly had come to rest upon Montenegrin territory, and there it rested when Serbia was overrun. The Serbs had fallen back in great numbers through Montenegro, and if only to clear them out, it seemed a feasible project for the Austrians and Germans to sweep Montenegro as they had done Serbia. Now it is clear that such a possibility was hardly one that the Allies could contemplate with calmness. The strategic value of Salonika was that it lay on the flank of the enemy's line of communications with Turkey. But if Salonika were destined to be used for advance, an enemy installed in Montenegro would have an exactly similar strategic position with regard to the Allied line of advance.

Further, the Mediterranean was virtually the British line of communications with Egypt and the East, and with Salonika. It was necessary that if it should become the happy hunting-ground of German and Austrian submarines they at least should have a difficulty as to their bases. Cattaro, the southern Austrian naval base, had not been used as a base of any importance, because it lay under the shadow of Mount Lovtchen, the "black mountain," from which Montenegro takes its name. If the mountain and its hinterland could be cleared, this would be tantamount to presenting the Austrians with a new first-class base. Their smaller naval craft had already been all too active, and had sunk in a very short space seven vessels sent out by the Servian Relief Committee.

These very obvious considerations one might have thought sufficient to cause the Allies to take energetic steps for the defence of Montenegro. Austria, before the war, had attempted to bargain away Mount Lovtchen; but Italy had ever stood in the way of a change which would so materially have helped her "ally." If the other Allies had been engaged too deeply to help, it might have been thought Italy would have taken some step to save herself. A small force well armed and munitioned could have defied Austria and Germany. But Italy did not move. Montenegro, this tiny kingdom which had resisted the attempts of various enemies against its independence for five hundred years, now saw itself threatened with invasion from almost every corner at once. Serb in race, language, and religion, it shared the Serb aspirations. From the first it had fought with its brother race, and it had begun the first Turco-Balkan war. How came it that Montenegro was left to its fate, and to so sad a fate?

At the beginning of the war the sympathy of the Allies had been strongly with Montenegro. Before the end of 1914 the French fleet seemed on the point of reducing Cattaro, and this action safeguarded the only channel, the Adriatic, by which Montenegro could be supplied. But the Dardanelles expedition diverted the attention of the French, and Cattaro was left to recover. It is true France sent some old guns to the Montenegrins; but the entrance of Italy into the war changed the whole atmosphere of things. The price of Italian help was exceedingly heavy; it was, perhaps, a bad and certainly an unjust bargain. Standing for the principles of nationality and right, it ill became the Allies to offer Italy not only the Irredenta, but also



the Dalmatian coast as far as Spalato and the hinterland to the Dinaric Alps. The Iugo-Slavs, Serbs, and Croats of Dalmatia were thus left merely the Dalmatian coast between Spalato and Cattaro, and, in fact, a vast Slav population was doomed to exchange the suzerainty of Austria for that of Italy. It is not necessary to impute any hostility to the Italians; they were probably misled by the loud clamours of a handful of immigrants into thinking they were doing the right thing by Dalmatia. And fear, which prompts so much cruelty and injustice, impelled them to seek safety by possessing the potential staging for attack on their eastern coast. Behind the Dalmatian fringe of islands hostile plans could be prepared in perfect security.

But the effect upon the Slavs thus doomed to another period of alien rule was simply to alienate their sympathies from the cause of the Allies. Servia and Montenegro saw themselves as it were betrayed, and they drifted apart from the Italians. As a matter of mere profit and loss, it seems almost certain that the unfortunate treaty wrote off at one stroke much of the advantage which the accession of Italy brought to the Allied cause. The less obvious effects were probably the worst. Montenegro and Servia saw themselves left to take what they wanted while there was time; and Montenegro took Scutari. But this accentuated still more the divergence of Italian and Montenegrin policy. Italy was installed at Valona, and looked askance at the Montenegrin advance in the north. And Italy being in charge of the Adriatic, Montenegro was left at her mercy for supplies. If the waterway were not kept open, she might be starved; and the unfortunate divergence of aims tended to make Italy less careful about this vital matter. Further, the Austrians began about this time to profit by the German submarine methods. The Italian navy speedily lost two cruisers, and seemed with them to lose all taste for adventure. The one Montenegrin port was mined by Austria, and Italy found it all she could do to keep her communications open with Valona.

As a result, when the Serbs were most in need of help they found themselves abandoned. The Montenegrins nobly saved them by giving the destitute refugees their own stores; but they themselves were left almost to starve. It was at this time almost impossible to draw attention to the evils of the situation. Those who knew hardly dared to write, for whatever they might say could only be an indictment of the British and Italian foreign policy. Sir Arthur Evans, it is true, wrote some vigorous letters in the press; but comment was perforce restrained. Italy had lost all chance of real statesmanship in an ill-advised bargain over country which in equity was no more hers than Austria's. The position was not improved by the humiliations to which individual Servian refugees and representatives of the Southern Slavs were at first subjected on Italian soil. Such treatment was part of that prolific sowing of ill-judged deeds which may continue to bring forth fruit when the stark barbarities of the war are sinking into oblivion. Unhappily the recollection of these unfortunate events was not wholly obliterated, although Italy later made some amends.

Italy, to put it bluntly, was afraid of the possibly strong Slav state which might replace Austria on the eastern shores of the Adriatic, and she therefore gave them almost the same causes of ill-will that Austria had given Italy. The inevitable weaknesses of a coalition of more or less equal allies gave birth to these anomalies, and there was no statesman in the Allied countries shrewd enough to see that the new breaking up of Dalmatia left a dart in the side of the Slav peoples which might endanger the future peace of these lands.

All these poisonous humours seemed to come to a head at once. Montenegro had held open a door of retreat to the Serb armies when they were cut off from joining the Allies at Salonika. The Serbs fell back into Montenegro, and the Austrians drew a line about the small hill country. The prizes of a clearing of Montenegro we have seen: full use of Cattaro, and a strategic position denying an advance to the Allies from Salonika. The Montenegrin army was not a modern army at all. A small handful of brave fighters, it could not hope to hold out against a force with ample modern artillery pressing in from all sides. Mount Lovtchen was a formidable object to attack; but it could be overwhelmed by heavy artillery fire both from land and sea. This was how the national height fell in the second week in January. Cetinje, the village capital of Montenegro, could not be held, and was taken almost immediately afterwards. And Montenegro being thus isolated and overrun, terms were accepted from Austria.

The Court was never wholly one as to the destiny of Montenegro. The small country was regarded as being a future legacy to Servia when King Nicholas died; but those of the royal family who did not look with favour upon the end of their sovereign state had for long intrigued with Austria. How far such intrigues had arrived at any specific solution of the difficult situation cannot be said; but the desertion by Italy would be a strengthening factor in impelling the Montenegrins to come to terms with Austria in the hope of saving themselves. The news of the fall of Lovtchen had hardly become known before a statement of the Hungarian premier, Count Tisza, became current. He stated formally in parliament that the King of Montenegro had asked for terms, and being told that there must be unconditional surrender, he had accepted. Great rejoicing took place over this announcement, which at the least was evidence that another unbiassed royal observer regarded the Allies' cause as hopeless.

The exact sequence of events cannot be given, as there seem to have been cross currents at work. But no sooner had the announcement of Count Tisza been received than there arose a rumour that the terms had in fact been rejected. Negotiations were begun, and they were later broken off. So hard were the terms that it was hardly possible that the Montenegrins as a whole would accept them. Some did actually lay down their arms and become interned. But Austria demanded all arms, even those old-fashioned monsters which had been handed down as of yeoman service against Turkey. The men were to be interned, and the women were to be allowed to remain in some of the villages. Dispirited, deserted, betrayed by intrigue, the bulk of the Montenegrins yet retained the pride of a warlike race. Austria lost the triumph a little statesmanship would have given her, and the men took up arms once more. They could not turn the Austrians out, but they could cause much trouble.

Meanwhile King Nicholas and the Montenegrin Prime Minister left the country, and passing through Italy went to Lyons. He was the third king to suffer exile; but the two previous monarchs had escaped dishonour. Austria swept on and flowed into Albania, to cause more trouble for Italy, who, desiring to limit severely her contribution to the war, found herself involved in a further adventure.



## IV. IN THE TRACK OF THE ENEMY.

THE war which could never fail to be memorable for many reasons will ever enjoy a melancholy and, it is to be hoped, a unique history for the utter ruthlessness with which the enemy waged it. Wherever the Germans went, wherever their influence extended, it carried with it a blight which attacked all those noble seeds which flourish under the atmosphere of civilisation. There is no need to give way to the inevitable impulse to trace the results of such a phenomenon in the philosophy which had flourished in Germany before the war. Whatever may be thought of the extent to which the baleful influence of Nietzsche had penetrated the strata of modern German society, their conduct of the war was certainly as near a fulfilment of that philosopher's tenets as could be desired. No disciple could more completely set aside the tenets of Christianity than the German armies. It was the law of force, or perhaps, better, of fear-inspiring force which everywhere seemed to carry out the behest of the Kaiser to his legions serving in China—to let every one who fell into their hands be at their mercy, so that all should come to dread their name.

The aftermath of the first fiery ordeal of Belgium was in some ways even more terrible. That might seem to promise a term; but the dull, hopeless régime of horror into which the country settled down after the autumn had established the German legions over the greater part of it was more bitter almost than death. About five and a half millions of Belgians clung, in spite of all, to their country, living in their houses as in burrows which had at least the solace of familiarity. Not more than 20 per cent. had fled or suffered the last extremity; and those who left found their way to Holland, France, and England, to ply a rootless life till the passing war should allow the sun to shine anew and establish them once more in their native soil. Those who were left behind were confronted very speedily with a nearer and starker death than that of the first victims of the invasion. Many had no homes; most had no resources and no means of a livelihood, and the nation looked starvation in the face.

Belgium normally is an industrial country, depending very largely indeed for her sustenance upon imports. But imports had ceased. The people were penned into districts and forbidden to move. Germany, who had reduced Belgium to this state, calmly announced that the Belgians could live if they would accept the German régime and work, and if Britain lifted the blockade from Antwerp. But she would accept no responsibility for feeding the people, her resources being adequate only to the burden of feeding her own population. American feeling, aroused by this incredible barbarism and by the levies of money and of foodstuffs for one pretext or another, in September 1914 attempted to initiate machinery for the alleviation of the misery. Promises were extorted from Germany that she would use for herself none of the food shipped for the Belgians, nor would she take such supplies as a release of native resources for her use. The promises, after some infractions, were kept with the greatest punctiliousness, and the American Commission formed to supply and distribute the food was guaranteed by Great Britain complete immunity for their shipments.

Mr. Herbert Hoover, an American engineer, became chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium. A remarkable man, he set about organising the relief of a nation with imperturbable coolness and resource. The organisation, rapidly formed,

was soon able to trace each pound of bread and the smallest contributions. The distributive headquarters was in Brussels, founding its scheme upon the Belgian communal plan with 50,000 voluntary helpers; and the headquarters of the Commission in London negotiated the supply and transit of the food. They had to secure 80,000 tons of cereals alone per month, and this had to be kept up for months. Towards the communal canteens thousands of old men, women, and children were daily to be observed converging from the different streets. Each carried a bag. The people who were normally fed soon came to be known, and were promptly visited if they failed to present themselves for the daily ration. An organisation of young Belgian women, calling itself the "Little Bees," looked after the children. Different coloured cards issued by doctors prescribed the proper food—milk, phosphatine, soup, or some admixture of milk and phosphatine.

Thus this feeding of the ruined nation went on. Germany later on helped the transport and distribution, but ceased not to levy the money tributes. Forty million francs was demanded monthly from Belgium; and this being so, Great Britain had to refuse a regular subvention which she had offered on condition that Germany demanded no more than her due by international law—the upkeep of her army of occupation. In April 1915 an influential committee was formed in Great Britain, and under the stimulus of its able secretary, Mr. (later Sir) W. A. M. Goode, its monthly contribution rose quickly to £500,000.

Holland housed about 500,000 people, and England a vast number who were boarded out or kept in large places like the Earl's Court Exhibition. Meanwhile, Belgium remained a dead country, its life shut in the tomb and the entrance sealed. The brave Cardinal Mercier, who issued a too fearless pastoral, found himself a prisoner; but such was the outcry that the Germans had to explain away their action, and the pastoral became a world-wide document. Concerts were given by the German bands in Antwerp, and the iron hand still held sway. The Germans earned undying obloquy towards the end of the year by shooting Nurse Cavell—a brave Englishwoman who had nursed all alike—for her admitted help to Belgians of military age to leave the country and join their army. The American Ambassador was tricked in the most cynical way, so that he was led to think there was still hope when the nurse had already been shot.

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In Poland the state of things was in many ways worse. We have seen how the refugees, fleeing from the Germans, or made to leave their homes by the Russian authorities, drifted eastward. Some were happy enough to find an asylum in Petrograd or other large Russian cities. Many, however, drifted eastward, but to come to an administration where they were directed back towards the west. Scenes of incredible misery were exhibited at the wayside, in woods and copses. When the great German advance had swept eastward past Brest to the Pripet, Poland was left to the mercy of the invader. Less organised than Belgium, its experience was less articulate and its sufferings worse. Poland is rather unfamiliar to the rest of the world, while Belgium is one of the world's holiday places.

In the winter of 1915 the misery of Poland was terrible. It had been bad the year before. But the armies, of the size which this war has made familiar, had swept backwards and forwards, tearing its pastoral lands to ribbons, beating its towns to dust, crushing and killing all life, except human life, which clings on so desperately to suffer more. Some of the larger towns were starved into submission



to Germany to the extent of continuing to manufacture foods they needed. Peasant bands were driven like slaves to make roads and lay railway tracks.

Relief found a voice abroad, but found no genius great enough to cope with the widespread misery. There were committees in Petrograd, organisations in Britain, France, and America; but it will not be known for years yet how high the tide of misery rose in the terrible winter of 1915.

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Servia, which was overrun towards the end of the year, aroused a more immediate passion of pity. The Germans here were outdone in cruelty by their new allies, the Bulgars, who worked off their racial animosity and the memories of their recent reverses at the hands of the Serbs. The Germans, more alive to the difficulties of having an irreconcilable nation on their flank, made overtures for peace. The Kaiser addressed a letter to his "heroic Serbs"; but the compliment was not returned, and stark pain and hunger roamed abroad in the winter. The pigs upon which the Serbs live were looked upon as a godsend to the German lovers of pork, and the fat filled more shells with high explosive. The long and bitter trek of the population before the advancing enemy was cared for by the nurses and doctors of many nations; but there was all too little real relief. The Germans fostered the suffering they brought with them, and were glad to extend its sway to the kindred country of Montenegro when Austria had found time and energy to drive that most heroic race from its titular home, Mount Lovtchen.

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The impress of the German aggression is stamped indelibly across the history of the little nations. The agonies of a Belgium, a Poland, or a Servia have become commonplaces of history to a world made almost apathetic by reason of excess of horror. But in the course of 1915 a new wave of horror passed over the civilised globe as the story spread that a whole people, one of the oldest civilised and Christian races in existence, had been practically wiped out by the Turkish ally of Germany. The world had heard of Armenian massacres before—the feverish device of a government which feared the political advancement of a subject people. The massacres of 1895 and 1896 were deliberately fostered and foreseen by the Sultan Abd-ul-Hamid when, nearly twenty years before, he had armed the Kurds, an ancient but uncivilised race, which had long overflowed into Armenian territory. Abd-ul-Hamid had learned in the Balkans the sinister strategy by which he hoped to preserve peace in his unwieldy empire by setting one subject people to massacre another. Again in 1909, under the new constitutional government which had overthrown that of Abd-ul-Hamid in 1908, and from which better things were expected, the terrible massacres of Adana in Cilicia took place. Since that time the Armenians had gone in fear unarmed while the savage Kurd went armed, and at least individual cases of violence and aggression were the daily possibility. The entrance of Turkey into the war was of evil augury for the Armenians; but no one could have foretold that Germany would stand by without a word of protest \* while the Turk should do to death, with every circumstance of violence and horror, a population of 800,000 men, women, and children, unarmed and defenceless, except for such poor weapons as those who turned at bay could snatch from the wreck of their homes.

\* This is the most generous interpretation of the German attitude.

The story of the Armenian massacres of 1915, with its endless reiteration of acts of bloodshed and torture, reads like the grim imaginings of a distorted brain; but the details are, unfortunately, too well attested to allow of any hope that the story has grown in the telling.

The Armenians lived in Turkey somewhat like the Jew in Europe—a race apart. They were no mere peasantry, but represented in some sort the brains and enterprise of Turkey. They possessed an intellectual curiosity, an artistic facility, and a genius for training alien from the temperament of the phlegmatic Turk. Before the days of Abd-ul-Hamid, though individuals sometimes suffered from race jealousy and hatred, the Armenians, with a practical monopoly of the trade and a great share in the wealth of the Turkish Empire, had been tolerated by the dominant race by reason of their utility. It was the deliberate policy of Abd-ul-Hamid which released the spring of hatred, and this reached the flood in the awful events of the summer of 1915.

The motive force of the massacres is plain enough. Hitherto Turkish ferocity had been in some measure controlled by the Concert of Europe. That Concert no longer existed. Turkey found herself ranged on one side with what she conceived to be the most powerful country in Europe, destined to be victorious over the Allies and especially over Russia, hitherto the most importunate protector of the interests of the Christian population within the Ottoman Empire. The "gang of unscrupulous ruffians" who formed the "Committee of Union and Progress"—the government which had displaced Abd-ul-Hamid in 1908—were only too ready to seize such an opportunity. There were, perhaps, circumstances to fan the passions of religious and race hatred. The Armenian population of the Transcaucasus—Russian subjects—were fighting, and with conspicuous distinction, for the power to which they owed a certain measure of loyalty and gratitude. The entrance of the Turk into the war must have roused some sort of aspiration among the Armenians. Defeat for Turkey might mean an independent Armenia, or failing this, an autonomous Armenia within the Russian Empire. There is no evidence to show, and it is quite unlikely that a people made circumspect by living in the shadow of persecution showed any sign of their hopes and fears. But the Turkish Government could not fail to guess at them. Besides the contingent of Armenian subjects of Russia fighting for the Allies, there were many refugee volunteers who had fled Turkey in the former persecutions. These, with their first-hand knowledge of the border region where the fighting was going on, were found to be of immense value to the Russian strategists. The Turks took toll of the Russian Armenians in their invasion of the Caucasus and north-west Persia in the winter months of 1914, sacking the Armenian villages with a terrible ferocity. But this was, after all, within such rights as war allows. The Young Turks then turned to revenge themselves on the Armenians within their own borders. There is every evidence to show that the crime against the Armenians in Turkey was not the spontaneous result of an outbreak of popular passion. It was the deliberate policy of Enver Pasha and his associates, and the massacres in all their revolting detail were planned and carried out with sinister foresight and completeness by these men and their agents. The Young Turk was no more liberal than the Old Turk towards the non-Ottoman elements in the Turkish Empire—elements which, by their variety and quality, might have been so easily a source of prosperity and progress to a liberal Government. In fact, it appears that the massacres of Adana were motivated by resentment of the fact that the



Armenians, inspired by the professed ideals of the new Government, had let it appear that they looked forward to a real era of liberalism, in which the men of all races should be equal within the Empire.

The Armenians, indeed, pinned a touching faith to the new régime even after the massacre of Adana, so impressed were they with the theory as opposed to the practice of the Young Turk party; and before the entrance of Turkey into the war, a new scheme of Armenian reforms had been drawn up, and had been accepted by the Turkish Government. Even when the event gave colour for the postponement of reform, no warning was given of any *volte face* in the policy of the Porte. But the old leaven of intolerance was at work. Abd-ul-Hamid had said years before that "the way to make an end of the Armenian question was to make an end of the Armenians." The Young Turk approved the sentiment, and it was in gloating over the immediate preparations for the extermination of the Armenian race that Talaat Bey, the Young Turk leader, echoed the words of the original persecutor in the gleeful prophecy: "After this there will be no Armenian question for fifty years." It has been well said that Turkey shows no gift for organisation except in the sphere of massacre. The process of extermination of a people was in this case adequately planned and achieved. The methods adopted in all parts of Armenia bore a family likeness, though refinements of detail were left to the wit and whim of mere officials, most of whom were already conversant with the methods of massacre. Almost simultaneously the message was flashed to those concerned, and to the villages remote from the telegraph riders on horseback conveyed the sinister orders. The recognised method of procedure was begun on the next day, when, in each town or village, the local gendarmerie appeared with fixed bayonets and summoned all able-bodied men not already drafted off for military service to appear before them on pain of death. According to the generous interpretation of the term "able-bodied men," all males between fifteen and seventy years of age were marched out of the town under formal escort in this way. They had not penetrated far into the hills before they were set upon by a special gendarmerie recruited from the prisons, brigands, and savage Kurds. By gun or bayonet they died to a man. There were, besides these able-bodied men living their normal lives in village or town, a considerable number of Armenians of military age actually serving in the Turkish army. The obligation to military service had been extended to Christian as well as Moslem within the Ottoman Empire as soon as Turkey joined in the war. This might be interpreted as a privilege rather than a burden, for hitherto the Armenian population had been studiously kept unarmed. Some Armenians had paid in money for the commutation of service; others had taken no steps at all in the matter. Naturally no movement of patriotism called them to fight for Turkey. Those who were actually drafted seem to have been told off at a very early stage into labour battalions, for the service of road-making. They were then deprived of the arms for which they had no pressing need. It is certain that these labour gangs met the same fate as the able-bodied men left at home.

There were terrible variations in the methods by which practically the whole male population of Armenia were done to death. Sometimes a farcical court-martial was held and the "delinquents" were shot. At Trebizond, according to the unimpeachable evidence of the Italian Consul, some thousands of people were taken out to sea in boats and deliberately drowned. The whole attitude of the Moslem population to this nation in its agony was of those who either participate in or watch

curiously the slaughter of cattle. At one place the men were poleaxed beside the graves prepared for them.

Not only on this large scale was the murder of the male population achieved. Individuals, often notables, and friends and supporters of the Young Turk party were arrested, summarily court-martialled, and shot or hung. Lohrab, the most notable of the Armenian deputies to the Chamber, was sent to his death—some say by burning—in Anatolia. Others were thrown into prison and horribly tortured. Men were bastinadoed until their feet had to be amputated.

If such was the fate of the male population, imagination reels before the horrors thrust upon the now defenceless women and children, and the few aged men who now represented the manhood of the race. The treatment meted out for these was neatly labelled "deportation." It covered every conceivable agony and shame which womanhood and childhood can suffer. They were ordered to leave their homes and possessions and march out under convoy to far-off and solitary places, where even the attenuated remnant who arrived could not possibly find the means to live. Various periods of notice were given, and sometimes permission to sell goods or hire vehicles, such as ox-carts, to carry them on their journey. The household goods of a thrifty and often cultivated population were bought up by the shiftless Mohammedans for a song. What was not sold was stolen, but the result was the same in the end. The exiles were not allowed to carry more than a minimum of cash, and this was soon reft from them by the ruffianly gendarmerie who formed their escort. The period of notice of the date of departure and the permission to hire vehicles were alike a farce. For the most part, the summons to take the road came as a surprise. Women were driven into the dismal procession from the wash-tub or even from their beds, and the owners of the ox-wagons, having received their hire, invariably failed to appear, or turned back after a few hours' journey. They were Moslems, of course, and had no inducement to follow a forlorn cause into the wilderness.

But even before the procession set out a terrible toll in flesh and blood was taken by the Turkish officials, who chose the younger and more comely women and girls to swell their harems, or to be sold into slavery in the open market. Children, too, were taken in this way. Some were killed and some sold, but always to Moslems, and with forced apostacy as the price of their lives being saved. Bereaved parents were ready sometimes to purchase their children's lives at the price, but the doom by which their children went from them to an inevitably permanent separation was perhaps worse than death. The moral as well as physical suffering was almost beyond the endurance of human nerves. The horrible process went on at each village through which the exiles passed, the prominent Moslems everywhere being given their choice among the women and children. Many women chose death rather than shame, and some hurled themselves to destruction with their children in their arms. Starvation and disease did their steady work, and the horrors of the deserts near the Euphrates and the Tigris, to these hill-dwellers, effectively thinned the ranks.

It is noteworthy that offers to embrace the Moslem creed were not accepted as in former massacres. The movement was not one of religious fanaticism, but of political calculation. In only one place was the population encouraged to make this abjuration. But then it availed them nothing, for, having sold their consciences, they were treated in the same way as the other victims. When the



numbers were not sufficiently depleted by deaths from starvation, weariness, and despair, more drastic measures were taken. Girls and children were horribly mutilated and done to death. Women in childbirth were driven on by the whip. When one batch reached the Euphrates and its numbers still appeared too large, every child under fifteen was taken and summarily drowned. The few who could swim were shot down as they struggled in the water.

It is comforting to reflect that not quite everywhere were the Armenians taken unaware and left entirely at the mercy of their tyrants. In some few places the men made resistance. But even among these the population met the same fate as those who had been led unsuspecting to their death. In other cases they bore a siege for days and even weeks against vastly superior numbers of Turks. The little garrison of 4,000 at Kara-Hissar held out for a fortnight; but the position was rushed at last, and the heroic defenders were put to the sword. In the town of Van, in the heart of Armenia proper, another heroic stand was made. It is to be remembered that the process of murder by "deportation" had been for the most part dealt out not to the people of Armenia proper, but to the population established in the towns and villages of Anatolia and Cilicia. Armenia proper, the borderland where Russian and Turkish fronts joined fight, had suffered incredibly since the beginning of the war. The Turks revenged their repulse after their first showy advance into Russian territory by wholesale massacre of the Armenian population on both sides of the border. It was with the memory of the murder of their leading citizens that the men of Van resisted for four weeks a siege in which they were outnumbered by nearly four to one, until they were relieved by the advance of the Russians. But here, as on the Polish front, the Russian line swayed backward and forward. The triumphal and rapid advance which might have saved the bulk of the Armenian population was not made. Yet in this one district near Van some quarter of a million of refugees were saved from the wreck of a nation. When the Russian army fell back from Van, a horde of Armenians threw in their fate with them. Harried by the Turco-Kurds, but protected by the Russian Armenian volunteers in the army, they embarked, for the most part hungry and footsore, on the hundred-mile journey, which took them over the Russian frontier, and to safety if not to comfort. Many, of course, fell by the way; but this considerable number of survivors concentrated in the Russian Caucasus, where such measures of relief as could be hastily improvised were accorded. Russia put her best in medical aid at the disposal of the sufferers, and funds for the relief of the distressed people were started in England and America.

Besides this remnant rescued by the Russians, some 5,000 Armenian refugees were rescued from the coast region near Antioch by a French cruiser. They had made an heroic resistance from the hill country, but were now running short of ammunition. Their one anxiety was to continue the fight; but they were persuaded by the Frenchmen to embark, and were safely landed at Port Said. Some few Armenians escaped from Constantinople to Bulgaria. From these remnants alone can the Armenian nation be built up again. Its ultimate fate is one of the many problems of the future. More pertinent at the moment is the question of the moral responsibility of those who allowed the Turk a free hand. It is probable that Germany could have brought pressure to bear on Turkey; but if the massacres were not encouraged, certainly no word was said to check them.

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The spirit issuing in so many ways over so large an area was in fact one, and it might be described—if one could treat it dispassionately—as the spirit of *war*, at last resolutely developed to its logical conclusion. This was, in fact, the German spirit applied to war. When the Germans criticised, they criticised frankly, with no thought of anything else. The Higher Criticism was no more than that. When they pursued natural or physical science, nothing could equal the thoroughness with which they garnered in the facts. They were not noted for originality, but for this sort of monkey trick of doing a similar thing similarly they were unequalled. In pursuit of war, with the same thoroughness they applied the idea everywhere. War means the destruction of the opponent's force. His force was not only men ; it was all his resources, material and spiritual. The Germans showed no insight into how the spiritual forces might best be brought to nought. As late as the beginning of 1916 German agents in America were still writing as though the best way to make an impression upon the President was by taking a decided stand about such deeds as the sinking of the *Ancona*, and so on. Fear, apparently, was the only mainspring, in their minds, of human action. To get one's way, it was necessary to deal brutally, and, if there were any protest, to deal more brutally.

When the *Lusitania* was sunk Germans said, "Now they will see." To them it was taking a firm stand. When the *Ancona* was sunk with a greater horror, that was being more resolute. Many passengers were shot as they climbed into the boats. Similarly, when the American people seemed, oddly enough, to resent the butchery of their people on passenger vessels, the Germans, keeping again the main end of war in view, climbed down laboriously. But later, when people might begin to forget their fear of her, she sank the *Ancona*, and later the *Persia*. No direct military advantage could be derived from these acts ; but they might be conceived as part of the attrition of British *moral*.

Again, the Zeppelins were sent to London, and, with some show of pretence, attacked parts of the civilian dwelling quarters. London was a "defended" city within the meaning of international law. It was not more defended than any small centre of any large nation at war. Presumably there were guns, presumably troops. But if these were to constitute "defence" for the purpose of the Hague Convention, then that Convention had no meaning at all. In effect, that was the German spirit. "All things are permitted me, but not all are expedient." There can be no laws of war except in so far as these advance the end of war, which is the destruction of the enemy's force. And so in the twentieth century war at last came to its own. Before that time it had been received only with some clothing of foreign manufacture. To hesitate at ruthlessness the Germans held was fear. Fear, fear, fear! They introduced a reign of fear ; but, with the limited sense in which man when highly organised becomes at last a machine, they applied the principle too woodenly. Ceasing to think of to-morrow, or rather holding that to-day holds to-morrow in its pocket, they set their terrible seal over the whole of Europe. If the world quivered at the searing touch, that was all to their advantage. Germany will probably not fully reap this "advantage" for a generation.



## V. THE FIRST MARCH ON BAGHDAD.

TOWARDS the close of 1915 almost every venture of the Allies seemed to come to failure. Russia had fought one of the greatest campaigns in history, and had fallen back to the Pripet marshes with heavy loss; the offensive in the West faded away into the desultory fighting which never ceased; and Serbia and Montenegro had been overrun, and the Allied forces had to fall back to the entrenched camp of Salonika. But the Mesopotamian campaign, which up to a point had been brilliantly successful and then passed to a phase of bitter humiliation for Britain, took on the colour of an even graver disaster.

In the beginning of 1915 the British seemed to be safely established in Lower Mesopotamia. They held Kurna, and from that point dominated the head of the Persian Gulf, and gave protection to the Anglo-Persian oil line. The British force was as yet but small—considerably less than an army corps, but it had been uniformly successful. In February it became known that a Turkish force was pushing south-eastward from Amara towards the Karun river, and General Gorringe was sent towards Ahwaz with a small body of troops to cover the territory of Mohammerah, whose sheik was friendly to the British. Under cover of this threat to the British right, a more formidable movement was made against the left rear in April, and at the Battle of Shaiba (or Barjisiyeh) this force was met and defeated.

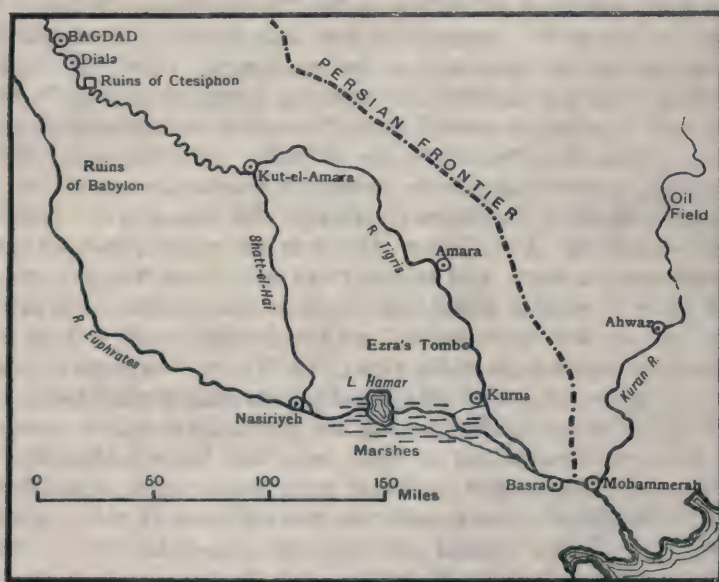
**Shaiba.**—General Sir John Nixon, the new commander-in-chief, arrived with reinforcements on 9th April, and it was three days later that General Mellis met the Turkish force at Shaiba, which lies some ten miles to the west of Basra. The intervening country lay under water, and the British position held but this one loophole of escape on the night of the 12th. The Turks, who much outnumbered the little British force, though beaten off time after time, had worked round the position, and on the 13th General Mellis, finding his position critical, resolved to attack. In this he followed the teaching of Foch, who had himself applied it so ably at Fère Champenoise. The attack, delivered with much vigour, compelled the Turks to fall back on Barjisiyeh, where, until the late afternoon of the following day, the Turks stood firm. Then a general advance was made under a heavy and sustained fire, and the Norfolks, Dorsets, Mahrattas, and Punjabis pushed the Turks from their trenches, and had the satisfaction of seeing them flee, pursued by their fickle Arab allies. A pony transport train was galloping up, and an explanation for this almost inexplicable rout has been found in the suggestion that this was mistaken for artillery reinforcements.

**Second Battle of Kurna.**—On 31st May another engagement was fought near Kurna. The ground about the Turkish position was deep in water, and in the battle the British troops fought from the native boats (*bellums*) bearing heavy shields. The island positions were shelled from the *Odin*, *Lawrence*, and *Miner*; while the launches *Shurana* and *Shaitan* cleared the way for the advance of the *Clio* and *Espiègle*. Some of the troops, Oxforas and Bucks Light Infantry, charged waist deep in water against the Turkish positions. The bulk of the troops poled their bellums up to the Turks under cover of a heavy fire, and by midday the position was won. News was brought the next day that the Turks were in full flight, and General Townshend went upstream towards Amara, on the armed launch *Comet*, and received the surrender of the garrison. He had no other force for a whole day

than the crew of twenty-two men; but when the troops arrived on June 4th, they were able to take over the 1,773 prisoners, who, with 11 barges from river steamers and much material, made up the booty of this battle.

Part of the success of this advance was due to the vigorous action of the force on the Karun river, which cleared Persian Arabistan, brought the hostile Beni Turuf Arabs to see reason, and finally put Mohammed Pasha Daghistani to flight. Colonel Dunlop followed across country in the sweltering heat, and reached Amara on the heels of Daghistani, to find Townshend established there.

**Nasirijeh.**—A little later General Nixon sent Gorringe up the Euphrates against Nasirijeh, whence the Turks had concentrated against Basra. His object was to relieve his left rear, and to cut off communication between the Euphrates and the Tigris. British gunboats occupied Sugas Sheyukh on 6th July, and nine days later the Turks were thrown back on Nasirijeh. On the 24th a heavy engagement was



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fought astride the river, and with complete success. Over 1,100 prisoners were taken, and about 500 corpses were left on the field.

**Kut.**—The next stage in the operations was less defensible. At Kut, nearly 150 miles upstream, it is true, the Turks were concentrating; but already the campaign had become hazardous, and it may have been precisely this fact which drove Nixon on. He decided to deal with the force at Kut under Nur-ud-Din. The Turks' main position lay some seven miles below Kut, astride the river. In all they must have numbered about three divisions, and against them Townshend was sent with the 6th Division. The Turkish reserves lay on the left bank, and Townshend determined to feint at the right, and then fling his whole force against the left. The forces were in contact on the 26th. On the following day the attack was made on the Turkish right, and at night the troops were brought across the river by bridge and flung against the left. General Fry made a frontal attack with the 18th Brigade,



while Delamain worked round the flank with the 16th and 17th Brigades. In the afternoon the Turks detected the ruse, and Delamain had to deal with those who were advancing against the bridge. A furious charge put the Turks to flight, and they broke off the action, leaving 1,153 prisoners, 14 guns, and about 1,000 dead on the field. Kut was occupied after this brilliant victory, and Townshend followed up the retreat.

The succession of successes seems to have turned the head of the commanders on the spot. Sir John Nixon in charge, and General Townshend as his chief executive officer, seem to have drunk of a not uncommon filtre that turned them mad. Kut was entered on 29th September, and in October the whole force went swinging forward towards Baghdad.

Let us see what they were embarked upon. From Kut to Baghdad is over 200 miles by the waterway, which an invader must perforce follow. The waterway was far better than that already negotiated. The river boats which had supplied the troops so far would have far better going on the river above Kut. The British strength was but slight. In all it numbered little over 12,000 men; but they had broken the lines at Kut, and driven the Turks in headlong flight to the north. Beyond lay the lure of the cities of Babylonia and a country saturated with the oldest memories of the world. It is true it had recent memories too. Mosul and Baghdad were the centres of Turkish army corps. Not far from Mosul ran the Baghdad railway, which was hurrying reinforcements from Syria. Troops were also marching south from Mush and Bitlis. But as they had not been in time to save Kut, so they might be too late to save Baghdad. What lay beyond Baghdad the soldiers did not seem to contemplate. Taken, it might be a tomb. That prospect does not seem to have disturbed any one; yet the long siege of Kut shows how much worse would have been the fate of the British if they had succeeded in their gamble, and been compelled to stand a siege 200 miles farther from a possible relieving force. The commonest prudence would have suggested that at least some provision should be made for a possible reverse. Yet the facts which leaked out later showed that the poor fellows who fell had to put up with conditions which are a disgrace to a civilised nation. There had been hardly any thought of hospital arrangements. The number of doctors was criminally insufficient, and the wounded had to lie out without cover on the river boats for days before the few doctors could attend to them.

The venture was indeed a gamble. Clearly if everything depended upon time, the days necessary to make provision for possibilities which might not occur were a blunder. The cardinal fact that no sufficient reinforcements were near or could arrive within reasonable time, and that an advance under such conditions stood to win at best a momentary spectacular success, while it might end in immediate disaster, and must end in a siege which would give all the chances to the enemy, does not seem to have been considered.

Kut entered upon a reign of peace and order almost at the moment it passed under British power. Tradition spreads easily in the East, and Sir Mark Sykes notes that within an hour of the British entry Arab cultivators were preparing claims for damage against transport officers, although a few days before the Turkish governor had been hanging and shooting on all sides. General Townshend promptly continued his advance to Azizie—a march of 60 miles, only 45 miles' march from Baghdad. The battle for Azizie was not prolonged, but the Turks made an effort

to stand. Their aim was to delay the advance sufficiently to allow the reinforcements to concentrate behind them. They were re-formed and already reinforced to some extent. But the position was taken, and the advance was continued. In Germany the newspapers began to discount the fall of Baghdad. The British thought it lay in their hands. Reinforcements were expected, and none but the High Command, presumably, thought how, with the communications already strained to support the advance of Townshend, fresh forces with full equipment could arrive in reasonable time.

By November General Townshend had pressed forward to Ctesiphon, which is only 18 miles by road from Baghdad. At this place are still to be seen the ruins of the palace of the Persian king Chosroes. It was within sight of that great time-worn arch, which has looked down upon so many vicissitudes, that the British fought the most bloody encounter of the whole Mesopotamian campaign. Babylonians, Parthians, Medes, Romans—all had tramped this country, which now resounded to the rifle crack of Sepoys and British and Turks. General Townshend faced a force about three times the size of his own, but after a fierce struggle he took the position and rested there for the night. The engagement had drifted some miles from the ancient Parthian capital, and this was the undoing of the British.

The most imperative need throughout the campaign was water. On 23rd and 24th November the Turks came forward to make heavy counter-attacks. These were repulsed; but water began to fail, and the troops had to fall back some four miles to take in fresh supplies. The delay gave just the time required for the Baghdad reinforcements to come up, and when the British were ready again the force against them had been so heavily augmented that General Townshend felt that it would be folly to attempt, with his weakened force, to cut through. He decided to fall back upon Kut. It was looked upon, no doubt, as merely a momentary retirement; but the fact that in the two months following the capture of Kut no reinforcements had appeared must have seemed ominous.

The wounded were evacuated, though in the horrible condition we have described, and the retreat was made in perfect order. On the last day of the month a rear-guard action was fought, and three days later the British had reached Kut, after a retreat which Townshend said was the finest achievement of his troops; and began to raise defences against a siege. Thus for the second time the British had come within hail of a spectacular victory, only to fail at the last step. They had lost at least 5,000 at Ctesiphon and in the retreat. The casualties were largely due to the considerable artillery accumulation which the Turks were found to have made. But the failure of the British cannot be easily put down to an unexpected factor of guns and men. Somewhere there had been a breakdown. If the reinforcements had reached Ctesiphon or the army retreating therefrom, we should have had some reason to think that at least, even if the attempt failed, the troops had not so ill conceived an operation of the greatest significance.

The fact that, entering Kut on 3rd December, the small British force was skilfully contained there for four months, despite all the battering attempts of belated reinforcements, is a sufficient commentary upon the greatest success they could have expected at Baghdad. The British Government needed a spectacular success, and the soldiers were over sanguine. General Nixon knew that Turkish reinforcements were arriving, but this does not seem to have disturbed him. The generals saw the prize within their grasp, and could not resist the temptation to grasp it.



Meanwhile below Kut, within the sphere of British occupation, peace and orderly development reigned; and the world looked on as the bungling attempts were made to relieve a disaster which should never have happened.

## VI. TRIBAL RISINGS IN EGYPT.

AFTER the defeat of the first Turkish attack upon the Suez Canal in February, Egypt lived for over a year with peace on its eastern borders. The Turks still moved about as they wished in the Sinai peninsula, and there were at times brushes between their detachments and the British patrols east of the Canal; but no concerted attempt was made to force the line of the Canal, though it was known that a considerable force was concentrated at Damascus. For this period of inactivity the Allies had chiefly to thank the Dardanelles campaign, which, even to the end, was too formidable a threat to encourage the Turks in any adventure from which the troops could not be recalled immediately in case of need.

Unable for this reason, and because of the preoccupation of the Mesopotamian campaign, to launch an offensive against Egypt from the east, the Turks attempted to stir up trouble among the tribes on the western and southern borders. In the Sudan, Ali Dinar, Sultan of Darfur, on the borders of Kordofan, was easily led to denounce the British suzerainty under which he had long been restive, and he followed up this act of defiance by raids across the borders.

More formidable for the moment was the action of the Grand Sheik of the Senussi Arabs. A vain and avaricious man, Sayed Ahmed responded readily to the suggestions of Nuri Bey, half-brother of Enver Pasha; and as early as May the tribes inhabiting the plateau west of the Nile and the oases on its southern fringe began to show symptoms of unrest. At Sollum, a few miles east of the Libyan frontier, Sayed Ahmed could rest content with these first murmurs of the Arabs over whom he wielded a sort of religious authority, and little more was done until Nuri Bey's promises were succeeded by Gaafer Pasha's gold and arms. In August the Arabs at Sollum fired on the officers of a British submarine; but Sayed Ahmed was able to deny that he knew they were British. Three months later the crews of the submarined *Tara* and *Moorina* were taken prisoner, and it was found prudent to withdraw by sea the half-company garrison of Sollum.

From this point the Sheik began to show his hand more openly. General Wallace was sent in December to take command of the operations which it was seen would be necessary. He landed at Mersa Matruh with mounted troops and infantry, who encamped near the place where Cleopatra's summer villa still shows a few feet above the white sands. A column of British troops moving westward on the 13th came into contact with a force of about 1,200 men at Beit Hussein, and for some time were hard put to maintain their position. But the opportune arrival of Australian Light Horse and Notts Royal Horse Artillery turned the day, and the Arabs fled, leaving some 180 dead on the ground.

On Christmas Day a heavy battle was fought between the main force of the Senussi and the British troops about hill Jebel Medwa, which lies about ten miles south-west of Matruh. Gaafer Pasha was on this occasion present with some 5,000 troops, armed with four guns and machine guns. General Wallace attacked with

his force divided into two columns. Colonel H. R. Gordon, of the Sikhs, with New Zealand Rifles, Bucks Hussars, and a Territorial battalion of the old "Die Hards," attacked on the right; while Brigadier-General Tyndale Briscoe, with a mounted force, struck on the left and worked up the rough water-course of the Wadi Merjid in an attempt to outflank the enemy. The Arabs were not easily pressed back on the right; but the flanking force from the left compelled them to retire, leaving 370 dead and 82 prisoners, with much ammunition and stores, behind. It had been a prolonged engagement, beginning before daybreak and ending in the late afternoon; but the British success compensated for the hard-fought battle.

The troops had little rest, but were unable to achieve contact with the Arabs until, after a further concentration, they moved out to Halazin, about twenty-seven miles south-west of Matruh, to attack a force with which the Sheik was present with Turkish and German officers. British airmen had noted the array of tents, and General Wallace quietly waited until reinforcements arrived. In the action which took place each side attempted to outflank the other. Wallace again divided his force into two columns. The mobile column on the left was again under the command of Brigadier-General Briscoe, and the right (and main attack), under Colonel Gordon, with Sikhs, South Africans, New Zealanders, and "Die Hards." There had been a whole week of heavy rain, and the flat ground lay deep in mud. It was over this the troops had to press in face of an accurate fire from artillery and machine guns. Few more fearful ordeals can be imagined than this ploughing through the mud in face of a hail of shell and bullets. Gordon was supposed to envelop the Arab left; but it fell back over the heavy ground, and with a more numerous force attempted to outflank him. The Turks also tried to envelop Briscoe's wing, and in the face of considerable odds, misled by the mirage, hampered by the state of the ground, the British fought two days, until about three o'clock on the 23rd, when the Senussi broke. No pursuit could be undertaken. The armoured cars were immovable. The Red Cross had to remain behind; but the British captured much material and stores.

It rained that night and the wind blew cold. Vehicles had to be man-handled the next day, and stretchers carried by relays of men. But the Arab *moral* had been broken, and never recovered. And the next act of the campaign saw the complete discomfiture of the Senussi.

## VII. THE EVACUATION OF GALLIPOLI.

Two days after the recall of General Hamilton, General Sir C. C. Monro was appointed to command the Mediterranean force east of Malta and excluding Egypt. He was not a soldier who had been much in the public eye, but he was known by those who are interested in the army as one of the most capable British generals. It was not known publicly, but his real commission was to report whether another attempt should be made to take the peninsula, and if so what force would be necessary to carry and hold the straits with a view to the capture of Constantinople, or whether the force should be withdrawn. It was not known publicly that the evacuation was even contemplated. Constantinople with its golden glitter towered over these trenches in the eyes of the amateur strategist and of the man in the street; but those who knew the actual conditions resolved the situation into a great



and perhaps terrible danger in the winter. The only way this could be avoided was by adopting General Hamilton's suggestion and sending out such heavy reinforcements that the position could be won. Hardly anywhere was it appreciated that the Allied forces on the peninsula had always been of such small dimensions. Indeed, that the force should have been kept to these limits is a sufficient commentary on the frivolity with which the campaign was conceived and conducted.

Sir Charles Monro visited Gallipoli on 31st October and reported \* that the evacuation should be carried out without delay, a fact which became known through a statement of Lord Ribblesdale in the House of Lords. On 5th November Lord Kitchener left England in order to view the positions himself. This fact is sufficient evidence of his opposition to the idea of evacuation; but it was reported later that he stated that the conditions were much worse than he could have imagined. Lord Kitchener returned to London at the end of the month, after visiting King Constantine and the Allied commanders in Servia. By this time part of the Suvla force had already made its appearance in Servia, and as early as 28th October Lieutenant-General Sir Bryan Mahon was in command of the British in Servia. The withdrawal of part of the troops was of course, like the evacuation of wounded, an ordinary operation of war. But those who had seen the positions gave it as their opinion that the total evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula could not be achieved without a loss of between 15 and 50 per cent. of the troops.

When the news was made public that Suvla and Anzac had both been emptied of troops with only two casualties, it was felt that a very great achievement had put a seal to an ill-starred adventure. The actual details of the withdrawal tended rather to exaggerate than to minimise this verdict. In some places the enemy trenches were but ten yards distant, and the beaches from which the men embarked were almost all exposed to the enemy's guns. Under such circumstances the smallness of the loss surprised even the commanders. They had left about fifty horses and mules to the last moment (and ultimately had to abandon them) for fear that they would be necessary to transport the wounded.

The organisation was remarkably perfect, though some other factors contributed to the great success of the operations. There had been an interval of calm and warm after cold and stormy weather. The troops at Suvla had suffered terribly from wet and exposure during the November blizzard. Trenches were flooded, and there were numerous cases of frost-bite. The Turks suffered as severely as the British troops, and this may perhaps account for their defective intelligence service. The full moon was half hidden by cloud-mist. The front to be evacuated was nearly twelve miles in extent, and the commanders had aimed at leaving nothing of value behind. They had therefore to remove all the men, animal transport, vehicles of all sorts, stores of food, surgical materials, and ammunition; and the incredible thing is that they succeeded in doing it—even in firing the few stores it was deemed imprudent to attempt to remove—without the Turks finding out what was going on. Nearly the whole British front was overlooked by the Turks, and if they had found out they could have forced the embarking troops to engage in rearguard actions under the most terrible conditions.

\* "The mere fringe of the coastline had been secured. The piers and beaches upon which they depended for all requirements of personnel and material were exposed to registered and observed artillery fire. Our entrenchments were dominated almost throughout by the Turks. . . . The position was without depth; the communications insecure and dependent on the weather."

The strain upon the navy was remarkable. There had to be a multitude of lighters, motor-tugs, trawlers, picket-boats, and transports. They had to be accumulated secretly, approach secretly, and leave secretly. The routine shelling by the Turks went on during Sunday and was replied to; but there was nothing more, and by 4 o'clock on the next morning, Monday, 18th December, almost all the men were embarked. A few stragglers and the medical units were taken off about four hours later. Various devices had been arranged to fire rifles after the troops had left the trenches. In some places candles were left burning so that at a certain point a string would be burned through and a rifle would go off. In other places water was left dripping into tins, which when full acted as a release to the trigger.

When dawn came the transports were all clear of the bay and the warships began to fire at the piers and other constructed works in order to destroy them completely. Stores of food had been soaked in petrol and fired previously; but even this did not warn the Turks, who seem to have discovered nothing until about 11 o'clock the next morning. Just before the last men left Turkish prisoners were coming in. And the Turks during the morning bombarded the deserted entrenchments.

Altogether this evacuation created an undoubted record in military and naval warfare, and General Monro with Birdwood, Maude, and Byng (the last to leave Suvla) deserved all the credit they won for it. The lines at Suvla rendered good service at the last by protecting the flank of the position at Anzac. If the Suvla position had been in Turkish hands it would have been almost miraculous that Anzac should be evacuated without heavy loss. It was assumed that the occupation of Helles would be continued. It was a more workable position than the Suvla and Anzac lines. It could be supported upon either flank from the sea, and a force stationed there immobilised a greater Turkish force and commanded the Dardanelles. It had been compared to a second Gibraltar. The Turks forewarned were, however, hoodwinked just as completely a second time. The evacuation of Helles took place upon 8th January. On the preceding day the Turks, after a fierce bombardment of the lines, attempted to attack. The bombardment began at 1.30 P.M., and from 3 P.M. to 4 P.M. was kept up with the most violent intensity. About 4 o'clock they sprang two mines, and an hour later, fixing bayonets, they left the trenches on two small sectors. Almost all the guns had already been removed; but fire from the sea worked havoc with their left flank, and the Staffordshires accounted for all who advanced. The British casualties were 5 officers and 130 men killed and wounded. During the night of the 7th, which was fine, the evacuation went forward smoothly. There were 35,000 men, 4,000 animals, and 100 guns to be removed; but the plans had been carefully laid.

On the second and final night of the evacuation the conditions were far different. About 4 P.M. the weather suddenly grew worse, and later the wind had freshened till it blew at a force of thirty-five miles per hour. Piers were washed away, and part of the plan had, therefore, to be changed. It had been intended to bring the destroyers close up to one of the beaches where ships had been sunk. But the piers which connected them were washed away. From midnight onwards it was only just possible to use piers and lighters. At one beach a lighter was flung ashore and that place had to be abandoned for the embarkation. In spite of all adverse conditions two of the beaches had completed their work by 2.30 P.M., and all beach parties were embarked by 4 A.M.



An enemy submarine was off Cape Helles about 9 P.M. but did no damage and gave no alarm. After the evacuation the stores were fired by means of a time fuse. Before that the artillery had been silent during the whole night. But the memory of Suvla evidently told the Turks what was happening. Red lights were burned all along the line, and the beaches at once came under a heavy bombardment, which extended to the second line of trenches. But the shelling, which continued till after daybreak, was too late. All the troops had fled. All guns and howitzers with the exception of seventeen worn out guns were removed, and these were blown up. One British rank and file was wounded ; the French suffered no casualties.

There can, of course, be no two opinions about this withdrawal. It was a most masterly feat, and General Birdwood and Admiral Wemyss, who elaborated the plans, and the generals who carried them out would have won their niche in history if they had done nothing more.

The withdrawal was indeed a comparatively cheering affair. It showed the world and reconvinced the British that they had still some first-rate generals. The navy has ever been a service in which any one might have a legitimate pride. For coolness, initiative, resource, and energy it cannot be equalled much less excelled. But the army had other traditions. Britain has had an unfortunate history of victory through multiplied failures ; and the Dardanelles campaign offered a fresh example of this, only its circumstances were perhaps more tragic.

From first to last the British suffered 117,549 casualties, 28,200 being killed. Between 25th April and 11th December there were 96,683 sick admitted to hospital, and many of these died. When it is remembered that before the evacuation there were not 120,000 British on the peninsula some idea is gained of the vastness of these casualties.

Sir C. Monro, who was in supreme command, was to have a more stirring platform. Sir Douglas Haig, becoming Commander-in-Chief, left a vacancy for the commander of the 1st Army. To this position Sir C. Monro was appointed.

It was an ill-fated campaign from the first. It was not initiated until the Turks had been convincingly warned of the Allies' intentions ; and, begun, it was starved of troops and the siege train without which so small an army had never a chance of taking positions of such natural strength as those upon which the Turks were entrenched. Suvla Bay will always rank among the ill-sounding names in British ears. There was present all the material which has given Britain its undying fame ; but there was also the incredible lack of forethought from which Great Britain suffers too much in its administration and not a little in its military history. It was Britain in microcosm : undying courage, fertility of resource, daring, tenacity, coolness, and skill ; and terrible disorganisation, inertia, carelessness, and a pride of outlook which disdains ordinary prudence. There was no room for the Turkish boast of having driven the British into the sea. They came from the sea : they went back to it. They were saved by it, as it had in the first place lured them to the adventure. But as Rupert Brooke, the brilliant young poet who untimely ended a life full of promise there, memorably said, this land "is for ever England."

So long as Britain has a history will the memory of this mad adventure ring and resound through it, with many memories of glorious deeds of men of strange races from every corner of the world.

# VIII. RUSSIA'S OFFENSIVE-DEFENSIVE: RIGA-DVINSK, THE BUKOVINA, ERZERUM.

ONE of the effects of the war was to teach people geography, and the strange sounding names of tiny Russian hamlets gained the significance of those familiar homely names around which a life's memories had grown up. But these topographical details of Russia and Servia were not so new and unfamiliar as those of places which are saturated with the almost legendary history of the early days of the world. In Egypt men were drilling and manœuvring; there was fighting upon the Hellespont; British soldiers were fighting in the very heart of that country where tradition places the birthplace of the race; and soon the infrequent highways of Armenia, which stretch between the Black Sea and Persia and Mesopotamia, were alive with all the disorderly order of marching troops.

**Riga.**—During October the Russian armies assumed more and more the control of their movements. By the third week of the month the Germans were in possession of the left bank of the Dvina between Friedrichstadt and Kekken, whence their line turned south-west to Olai, past Kish, to approach the Gulf of Riga about Lake Kanger. Riga was but ten miles from the nearest German positions, and the Riga-Dvinsk railway was under the German guns. For the next six weeks Ruszky, in charge of the northern group of armies, fought a skilful defensive on this front, and succeeded in the end in improving his positions. The northern channel into the Gulf of Riga was sealed by a small but brilliant operation on 22nd October. A Russian detachment was suddenly landed at Domesnaes, the most northern point on the western arm of the Gulf, and maintained itself there for two days, destroying the German position and much stores, and covering the mining operations in the channel. It then disappeared as abruptly as it had arrived.

The Germans gained a footing on Dahlen Island, near Kekken, but were unable to cross the river. During October further attempts were made to cut up to the shores of the Gulf along the Kemmern-Riga railway which skirts its southern boundary. At first some success was gained; but on 7th November a skilful counter-attack forced the Germans back in this sector, recovered Olai and Mitau, and, with the assistance of naval fire from the Gulf, compelled a considerable readjustment. Riga was now nearly twenty miles distant. To relieve the pressure the Germans attempted to recover their hold on the island of Dahlen, from which they had been ousted a few weeks before. After some vicissitudes they captured and held the point on the river bank opposite the northern end of Dahlen, but could not debouch from it.

Ruszky maintained control over the situation by the vigorous action of Phleve's 5th Army farther south. Striking due west of Dvinsk between 31st October and 4th November the Russians succeeded in compelling the Germans to withdraw some three miles, and under the threat from this direction struck north of Dvinsk, where the Germans had established themselves at Illukst. On 24th November the Russians captured the fortified farm of Yanopol and, after beating off a counter-attack five days later, advanced to the eastern outskirts of Illukst. Ruszky thus made his front safe for the winter, and when he retired through ill-health and Phleve took command temporarily the sector gave room for little anxiety.

**The Bukovina.**—Evert and Ivanoff, similarly, had kept the Germans and



Austrians engaged, and on the southern front all the advantage of the fighting lay with the Russians. So much was this the case that Ivanoff towards the end of December was able to initiate a movement which played a considerable part in dissuading the enemy from his plan of linking up with Greece by driving General Sarraill into the sea. Ivanoff's plan was to seize Czernovitz with Lechitsky's 9th Army and, while Brussiloff and Saharov fought holding actions on the right, to attempt an enveloping move with Tcherbatcheff's new 7th Army on Lechitsky's flank. The capture of Czernovitz would allow the Russians an opportunity to occupy the Bukovina, and at the same time would protect the northern frontier of Rumania.

The operations began on Christmas eve, and Mackensen was recalled to superintend the Austro-German defensive. The main blow was struck between the Pruth and Dniester; but there were subsidiary operations directed towards Lutzk. In four days Lechitsky had crossed the ridge between the rivers about Toporowca and the Russian line had been advanced at various points as far north as the Kovel railway. Brussiloff crossed the Styr opposite Kovel and carried Kolki, below the railway, on the first day of the new year. Tchartorysk was won within the same week and, under cover of this pressure and Tcherbatcheff's advance on the Strypa bridgeheads, Lechitsky was able to press near enough to Czernovitz to bring it under his guns. Mackensen removed his headquarters farther back, and for some days it was reported that the city had been evacuated. But by the third week of January the battle had died down and the Russians had gained little, at a loss equal to two or three divisions, except the successful creation of a diversion. But by this time their Caucasian campaign was making headway, and the rest of the Russian front sank into the uneasy sleep of winter.

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The Grand Duke Nicholas, as we have seen, was sent to take charge of the Caucasus at the beginning of September, and he took with him to Tiflis his Chief of Staff, General Yanuschkevitch. He went to succeed General Worontzov-Dashkov as Viceroy of the Caucasus; but it is probable that the appointment visualised a profound change in the situation in this area. It is customary to belaud a new commander at the expense of the old; but the Grand Duke and his Chief of Staff achieved in Armenia and Persia the sort of success that left no doubt as to the measure of their ability.

Russia's first encounter with Turkey in the Caucasus has already been described. Turkey had attempted a plan which might perhaps have succeeded with German soldiers, or with Turkish soldiers in another sort of country. But, depending upon the careful articulation of a number of small forces, it was fated to end in disaster when left to the accomplishment of soldiers constitutionally incapable of realising the significance of hours and minutes and handicapped by trackless mountain country which would have imposed a severe strain upon the best disciplined forces. Russia did not follow up her success. It is possible that had she done so she would have prevented untold misery both to herself and to the miserable inhabitants of Armenia. But her resources did not at the moment encourage any vigorous campaign in this quarter, and the Viceroy was hardly the man for that sort of action.

This inactivity of Russia had terrible effects for thousands of innocent men, women, and children. Large bands of Kurdish tribesmen were allowed to overrun the north-western part of Persia, killing and looting, and inciting lawless Persians to join them and take sides against Russia. The withdrawal of Russian troops

made such action possible ; and the withdrawal from Van in July resulted in the terrible massacres of Armenians. The explanation of these latter atrocities is that it was currently thought that Constantinople could never be held in face of an enemy Power installed upon the northern shores of Asia Minor. Armenia was the eastern gate of Asia Minor, and the slaughter of these hapless Christians was but another of the terrible sacrifices to fear. They had risen upon the Russian advance from Van in May 1915 ; but when the Russians were withdrawn in July owing to the long-continued advance of the Germans in Poland, the Turks took their vengeance.

**Persia.**—It was suggested that the overrunning of the Azerbaijan province of Persia and the campaigns of Caucasia and Armenia were definite and far-seeing schemes of Germany to secure the flanks of the new empire she was creating. In the plans for a Berlin-Baghdad Empire—or Prussia to the Persian Gulf, as we may prefer to regard it—some thought had to be paid to the forces which lay upon the flanks of the Empire. Hence Russia was to be beaten back over the Caucasus, if possible, and the Turkish frontier in Persia was to be pushed southwards. It is a little difficult to imagine even Germany, with her odd lack of insight into the springs of action, thinking to buy permanent security by massacre. If India were her model, what insanity of cruelty was the prototype of the action instigated by Germany against the Armenians ?

The Turkish action in Persia seems to have been much more an effort to disperse the force of the Allies, and it is hardly possible that the Turks would have undertaken their first campaign against Kars if it had not offered the chance of securing for themselves a far surer and safer buttress against Russia. We must not forget that the Turks looked to Germany for a reinstatement of their position and there were many shrewd enough to see how far the German suggestions carried them on the way. Persia had become in recent years a fruitful centre of discontent against Britain. Under the old traditional policy of suspicion against Russia, Afghanistan and Persia saw they had nothing to fear from Britain, whose interest it was that they should remain independent and strong. But with the Anglo-Russian agreement an era of spoliation had been introduced which made enemies for Russia and Britain.

Ispahan, the focus of the discontented parties, lay at the southern extremity of the Russian sphere of influence, and there Turkish and German intrigue flourished and waged a propaganda against the Allies. The Persian gendarmerie was officered by Swedes ; but all except the junior officers were withdrawn by Sweden, who feared that she might be led into difficulties by the action of the soldiers. Persia was thus in a difficult position. She was faced by numerous elements that threatened a breach of her neutrality. The Russians, she felt, had stirred up the activity in Azerbaijan which, if it did not lead to the Kurdish invasion, at least offered an excuse for it. The gendarmerie had openly revolted in some districts, and several Persian chiefs were taking sides against the Allies. When the Persian Government asked Russia to withdraw from Azerbaijan, under the plea that she could then deal with the situation, very naturally Russia looked askance.

In April 1915 an army of some 15,000 Turks arrived in North Persia under Halil Bey, and occupied the district about Lake Urmia. At the beginning of May a battle was fought between Dilman and Khoi. The Russians were outnumbered by four to one, but they had a strong force of artillery carefully hidden in good positions, and by holding a long line steadfastly they inflicted heavy loss upon



the Turks, who were completely deceived as to the strength of their enemy. May 2nd found the Russians outflanked on the east, but resisting gallantly. Towards evening it was seen that they could hold out no longer against so disproportionate a force, and arrangements were made for a retirement. Indeed, it is probable they would have been surrounded but for the arrival of Nazir-Begov with Armenian reinforcements. The rearguard, however, reported that the Turks seemed to be retiring, and this was confirmed on the following day. Halil Bey had found himself short of ammunition and so far from his base that he could not do otherwise than withdraw. The Russians promptly followed up their success and, clearing Lake Urmia, captured Van on 15th May.

Meanwhile the ferment in Southern Persia was spreading. It seems certain that Prince Reuss, the German Ambassador, played the same part as the German naval and military attachés at Washington, financing and secretly encouraging, if not actually planning, the movement against the Allies. Guns and ammunition found their way into the hands of the German *protégés*. Wireless messages to Ispahan circulated reports of the German and Turkish successes. The British and Russian representatives made protests, but without effect, and the landing of fresh Russian forces in Northern Persia had only a momentary effect in calming the activity.

The Turks had crossed the Caucasus and were back across the frontier to the neighbourhood of Olti, but made little headway owing to the Dardanelles attack and the success at Van. The latter threat was too immediate to neglect, and troops were diverted in this direction. Still, the Russians advanced until the critical turn of affairs in Europe caused them to evacuate the whole district in July, to the disaster of the Armenians who had risen in their favour. It was to this situation, which had been allowed to go from bad to worse, that the Grand Duke Nicholas came in September. The British were advancing on Kut up the Tigris valley; but elsewhere there was no relief. Intrigue had run riot in Persia, and the position contained all the elements of disaster.

The Grand Duke at once began to pour oil on the troubled waters. The Kurdish chiefs were persuaded to abandon Turkey, whose power was on the wane; and then the Russians began to filter back into Eastern Armenia and Northern Persia. Meanwhile the Turkish and German intrigues came to a head. Representatives of the Allies were warred against by bands headed by German representatives. The British Vice-Consul at Shiraz was killed, the British Consul-General at Ispahan was wounded, and the town was cleared of residents belonging to the Allied nations. At other places banks controlled by the Allies were raided, and British, French, and Russian people were imprisoned. By November things had reached so critical a pitch that the British and Russian Governments arranged that Russia should take any steps necessary in the country to preserve the personal property of people belonging to the Allied nations.

The prestige of the enemy was at this point probably at its zenith. The golden and steel corridor of the Germans had been opened through stricken Servia. The Allies were immobilised at Salonika, and fearful for that tremendous attack upon Egypt which was to have been the first fruits of the German access to Turkey. The Dardanelles had proved so dismal a failure that even its service in immobilising a considerable Turkish force was overlooked. It was in this sort of atmosphere that the Grand Duke began to deal with the Persian situation. He struck south and

occupied Teheran; west, and took Hamadan; south again, and took Kermanshah, along which road Turkish reinforcements were being hurried; and then finally occupied Ispahan. The force on the Baghdad-Kermanshah road was sent forward, and in spite of several checks marched towards Baghdad.

Before this, however, the Russians had attacked the Armenian problem with characteristic strategic ability. At the beginning of 1916 the Russians were concentrating about Kars, which, once a Turkish outpost, had fallen to them in 1878. The cold of the season was terrible, and on this bleak wind-swept plateau, 6,000 feet above the sea level, even the hardy and stoical Russian soldiery shivered with apprehension of freezing to death. All who could took refuge underground in dug-outs, which are the normal seasonal entrenchments against the enemy of winter. Methodically, preparations went on. The men were well clad and well fed. Their rifles and guns had also to be well supplied if the Turkish resistance across the frontier was to be broken. On the Turkish side of the frontier the tension of various elements all told in favour of Russia. The advance upon Baghdad had drawn in that direction new Turkish forces. Bitlis and Mush lost their divisions, which were sent to Baghdad. Even part of the Erzerum force was sent south, so that the British force advancing from Kut came up eventually against some six times its strength. Over the Caucasian and Armenian region there were left perhaps 130,000 men, only 90,000 of whom were regular Turkish forces.

**Erzerum.**—The course of the campaign was thus determined before battle was actually joined. Its conditioning factor being resources—apart from the leading and bravery of the troops—Russia, with a railhead at Sarikamish, three times as near as the nearest Turkish railway line, was able to readjust any weakness of balance in forces at least three times as quickly as Turkey. Erzerum being only about ten days' march from Sarikamish, such a handicap was almost decisive if the Turkish dispositions were, as we now know them to have been, terribly, indeed fatally weak. This is not in any way to detract from a campaign which was handled with the utmost skill and bravery. The Russians, disposed in three columns, were on the move in January, and the northern column at Olti was attacked by the Turks unsuccessfully, and the column got under way by 10th January. In eight days the Russians were at Koprokeui, the main obstacle on the direct Erzerum road, and the town was rushed in a snowstorm.

The fortress of Erzerum owes much to its position. Indeed, it is from that position it draws both its weakness and its strength. The nearest direct railhead was at Angora, which is so far away as to matter very little in one's calculations of the strength of Erzerum. The Baghdad railway, at the time of the Russian advance, had been extended to Nisibin; but as this lies some 200 miles distant as the crow flies, and by the only roads over the Taurus is considerably farther, this was of hardly more advantage. The strength of its position, however, was very great. The approaches from Russian Trans-Caucasia were restricted to the Parsan valley, a sort of depressed plateau among the mountains, and the defiles of the Olti Choi, past Lake Tortum, and tangle of mountains between it and the fortress.

The main approach by the Parsan valley was commanded by the Deve Boyun range, about the western end of which were three forts. The 9th and part of the 10th Turkish Army Corps at the end of the year were installed in this valley right up to the frontier. The 11th Army Corps held the more broken and difficult



approach via the Olti Choi. In effect, the position of Erzerum was not much unlike that of the crater of a volcano, with high rim bastioning it north, east, and south, though in places there were fissures in this high defence. It was practically impossible to turn; and the open side towards the west, which received the head waters of the Western Euphrates, also held the roads to Trebizond and Erzingan.

By the time that Koprokeui fell, the Turks had already suffered the greatest surprise of the campaign in finding the Russians over the tangle of hills of the Djelli Gol. Standing some 9,000 feet high, it had been thought hardly possible that so formidable a column could so rapidly cross these mountains. It was expected that the Parsan valley approach would be used, though the forces there, and the forts, tended to reassure the defenders of Erzerum. After rushing Koprokeui the Russians hastened across its bridge towards Hassan-kaleh. The Turks had been so severely shaken that they made little attempt to defend the ridge of Hassan-kaleh, though it was the last obstacle beyond the outer forts of Erzerum. The day after the fall of Koprokeui, the Cossacks pursued the retreating Turks to the line of forts and cut off 1,000 prisoners; and on January 20th the Russian artillery had been dragged up and was shelling the forts.

Meanwhile, in the Tortun area, the Turks fought more resolutely, and until 15th January their entrenched positions in the hills had resisted the five days' attack of the northern Russian column. But by this time the central column was on the flank of the 11th Corps, and to hold any longer was to risk being cut off. When the retreat began on 16th January, the commander of the 11th Corps found his escape converging with that of the 9th Corps, and in the resulting confusion the troops lost order. Rifles were thrown away, baggage and ammunition discarded, and 3,000 prisoners fell into the hands of the Russians. A considerable number of Turks took to the hills and hastened westward, hoping to strike the Trebizond road farther on. The hopes of Erzerum, to those who knew these facts, could hardly have seemed rosy.

But the different parts of the Russian plan began to fit in, like the pieces of an intricate puzzle. The Cossacks had taken Alashkert, north of Van; and on 26th January they advanced up the Mush-Erzerum road and occupied Hunus-kaleh. This brilliant stroke cut the fortress off from the south. The Turkish divisions in the district were driven southwards to Mush. The fortress was, in fact, practically isolated upon three sides, and the Russians had advanced along this great front an average distance of fifty miles, putting a great number of the enemy to flight, taking a considerable number of prisoners, and capturing much material.

The two northern forts of Erzerum—Kara Gubek and Tafta—were attacked on 10th February. The Turks apparently had never contemplated a defence against artillery in such weather; and when the guns, drawn through deep snow over steep inclines, appeared, there was hardly a pretence at defence. Tafta held out until, on the night of 13th February, the Russian guns exploded the Turkish magazine. Two days later, after further successes on the eastern front of Erzerum, the whole outer line had fallen. It needed little experience of this war to know that the days of Erzerum were numbered. Its safety lay in not being attacked. As soon as it became open to attack it was doomed. The Turkish problem was, whether reinforcements could arrive in time to meet the enemy in the field and defeat him, or to abandon Erzerum.

The Turks decided that they durst not abandon Erzerum without a struggle; but their plan was to hold it with a thin sprinkling of troops, the main body being moved off to meet the reinforcements. The defending force was to hold on at all costs, and the reinforcements would relieve them as soon as possible. But the events had fallen out so rapidly that the slight time given for deliberation was abruptly broken in on by General Yudenef, the Russian commander, who rushed the fortress before the Turks had completed their plans. The result was that 12,753 men and 235 officers, with 300 guns, fell into Russian hands. This was not the full toll of the loss, for the Turkish forces had been heavily struck, and the retreating divisions could not draw off more than from a third to a half of their effectives.

Erzerum fell upon 16th February—the most signal Allied success for over a year. It was the strongest fortified town in Turkish Asia, and was always regarded by the Turks as the key to Armenia. The echo of its fall reverberated throughout the world. For some few days the Turkish *communiqués* concealed the news, and when it was announced it was stated that Erzerum had been evacuated “for military reasons.” The very best military reason conditioned its evacuation—necessity. The effect in Turkey was an immediate depression. There followed recrimination, and Turkey was said to have asked for peace. There can be little doubt that feelers were put out; but the Russian claim to Constantinople made it impossible that Turkey would ever consent until reduced to the last extremity. But it was under these circumstances that the attack upon Verdun was opened, and it is probable the initiation of the attack owed its date to the great moral effect of the Russian victory. Erzerum fell on the Wednesday; on the Saturday the German heavy artillery opened its intense bombardment north of Verdun.

## IX. THE ZEPPELIN PROBLEM.

If the policy of sending Zeppelins to the United Kingdom was aimed at producing a panic among the people, it was long before it even approached success. It was not until the fourth raid had taken place that the public became seriously roused, and even this was due far more to indignation at what seemed, and, in fact, was later shown to be, impotence and culpable negligence. That these raids had a serious military purpose, and that the Zeppelins were far from the negligible toys they had been held to be by the British authorities, was not borne in upon them until twenty visits had been paid to Britain.

These began on January 19, 1915, and nine raids were made upon the south-east and one upon the Tyne during the next five months. On only one of these visits were bombs not dropped. In June the raids acquired a more sinister interest. More numerous bombs were dropped, and the ensuing casualties were greater. Thirteen raids took place in the following five months. Their radius did not extend beyond the south coast and eastern counties. The last of this series occurred on 13th October, and was the worst, there being 198 casualties. Seventy-one of these represented deaths, and fifty-six were those of civilians. Then, in what the theorists held to be the best months of the year for the raids, there was a lull, and the resumption produced upon January 31, 1916, the most serious raid up to that time. Its radius was greater, and the number of deaths resulting, though less than



that in the preceding October, was spread over a wider area. There was a further raid upon 5th March on the east coast; but though the number of casualties produced was far from negligible, it caused little depression.

These twenty-five raids represented clearly enough a number of small though terrible tragedies, and their general effect upon the people would have been far more serious but for the suppression of news. In spite of the loose rein given to gossip, even in March 1916 the bulk of the people were able to look upon the risk of Zeppelins with considerable calmness. Two raids during September 1915 came nearest to stirring up a panic. On Tuesday, 7th September, a raid took place on what the press was only allowed to describe as "the Eastern Counties and the district of London," and fifteen small dwelling-houses were destroyed. On the following night far more serious damage was done. On this occasion the airships visited London; and although no objects of military importance were struck, the raiders gave some very tolerable suggestions of their intentions. Some damage was done to the Great Eastern terminus. St. Bartholomew's Hospital was struck, apparently in an attempt to damage the General Post Office, which stands near by. Queen Square, Bloomsbury, received a bomb which partially wrecked several houses; and as the square lies near King's Cross and St. Pancras stations, we may guess that a military objective was again aimed at here. Some fires were started in the city; but not that great fire of London which the more brutal of Britain's enemies wished to start. The two raids together produced 162 casualties, of which number thirty represented deaths. The manner of these deaths caused no little impression in restricted circles. The victims were mostly civilians, and men were killed on stepping out of houses. Some were struck at the side of those to whom they were bound by the most sacred and intimate ties. There were thirty-four persons seriously injured, and some of these represented all the horrors of war mutilation. The Lyceum Theatre was damaged, and in some theatres and music halls there was an approach to panic as the loud repeated explosions were heard. There was even a touch of grim humour about the objects damaged, one being the office of the Anti-German Union, which was housed near the handsome *Morning Post* building.

These various episodes produced mild sensations. Many women tended to be extremely nervous of the nights, and some chemists plied a thriving trade in masks and various drugs which were supposed to ensure people against poison gases. But there was no evidence that any casualties were due to poison. And furthermore, while it remained sound policy to remain indoors and especially on the lower and lowest floors of houses, the swift destruction inflicted upon people in all sorts of positions showed that there was very little chance of safety, except to sleep in underground cellars beneath tall and massive houses. It is a striking tribute to the phlegm of the British people that only after this raid upon the London area, which contains nearly a sixth of the population of the kingdom, was there any sort of complaint, or any tendency to question the dispositions for defence.

It soon became clear that the defences of London were inadequate. The first Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Balfour, who, in the then chaotic state of affairs, was responsible for the defence of the capital city of the Empire, admitted that they were inadequate, and Sir Percy Scott was given charge of the problem. It seemed reassuring that so famous a gunnery expert should be placed in charge of the air defences of London, though the selection suggested that the leaning would be towards defence by guns, whereas it had become more and more clear to students of the

problem that the reply to Zeppelins was aircraft, formidable enough to cope with the airships and more mobile. Still people snatched at this grain of comfort. The defence of London was still divorced from that of the rest of the country—a position which could only obtain in a country so devoted to “rubbing along” as Britain. But people were prepared to trust Sir Percy Scott\* and hope for the best. Certainly it became obvious to those who could rightly appreciate the signs that a more scientific attempt was being made to grapple with the problem. As the Zeppelins not only changed their direction of flight rapidly but also their plane of flight, the correct ranging of guns against them, unless they were far lower than as a fact they risked flying, was not a very easy matter. Still it was capable of solution; and this being so, people leaned to a confidence that it would be solved. In the raid over London the shrapnel could be seen bursting far below the airships. One obvious change was made at once, and that was the substitution of a greater proportion of high-explosive shell, and people were again warned to remain indoors in order that the attempts at defence might not prove more dangerous than the airship bombs. In the week which saw the appointment of Admiral Sir Percy Scott three further raids took place.

An interesting article, purporting to be an interview with Lieutenant-Commander Matley, the commander of one of the Zeppelins which took part in the raid upon London, appeared about this time, and was reprinted in several British newspapers. Apart from the vivid impression of a flight over the greatest city in the world and something of the thrill of envy which lurked beneath the description, the account was chiefly of importance as outlining a theory of the use of Zeppelins. It is probably incorrect to attribute the casualties resulting from these raids as consciously desired and intended. Indeed, this commander expressed his regret at the deaths of civilians, and compared it, with a ready ingenuity, to the accidental deaths caused when artillery miscarries. Further, it also seems more likely that the Zeppelin raids had military objectives. Clearly, the natural isolation of the United Kingdom, and the fact that this, her chief enemy, had so far been able to escape, and seemed destined to escape, the horrors of war while they were carried on to German hearths by the operation of sea-power, must have been a distinct and special irritant to German nerves. To surmount this barrier which nature has placed about Britain, to seek out her depots, to make no place immune from attack, that surely was a military achievement which could not fail to attract the Germans. The well-defended coasts prevented the enemy carrying the war to the heart of the country from the sea. The “invincible” lines of infantry could keep an enemy from arriving there by land. But by air an enemy could strike anywhere, despite unbeaten armies and navies; and the moral effect, the possibly resulting panic when a proud insular people found its most sacred fastnesses penetrated and struck, must have made the prospect of Zeppelin raids—even in a strictly military rôle—an exceedingly attractive idea to the Germans.

Lieutenant-Commander Matley's ethics, however, though possibly logical, reduce war to a purely unthinkable expedient. The war had brought home to almost every one that *nations* do in fact fight to-day. It is no longer the war of samples; and a “Hundred Years' War” is to-day completely impossible. At most a sort of armed peace with both sides holding defensive lines could be made to drag on for a number of years. But war, at the pitch at which it was fought from 1915 onwards, involved

\* Very few knew at the time the trivial number of guns put at his disposal.



the inclusion of all the nation's robust manhood in the fighting line, and all the rest of the nation either making munitions or making some articles of equipment, or making goods to pay for the munitions and supplies. Women had to do their full share. But that the whole nation, from the babe at the breast to the oldest man or woman tottering on the verge of the grave, should be lawfully liable to be dealt with as a combatant, this must convince people of the atavism, the unthinkable brutality of war.

The officer suggested that "London is a vast military centre and military-defended city," and he stated that any one who had stood by his side would have had evidence of the fact. He meant, of course, the bursting shell, some of which was quite near enough to cause him anxiety, proved that London was a defended city. He states that anti-aircraft guns had been placed under cover of St. Paul's, which was quite untrue; and insisted that churches and museums should not be used as "cover or protection" for guns. And the objects of legitimate attack are "factors of military bearing on the preparation, concentration, or transportation of troops, or other military uses." Now, all this amounts to a clear proof that the civilian has no claim to be considered immune from attack. If he placed guns near museums and churches, these became liable to attack at once. They were "cover." If he placed them near offices or residential buildings, these too became legitimate objects of attack for the same reason. If he mounted guns *at all*, the whole administrative area surrounding the guns became liable to attack as a defended area. Add to this group of forbidden places every place where a few soldiers are billeted, every factory making anything connected with railways, mines, army clothing, guns, munitions, powder, etc., etc., and we see very clearly that it is a hundred chances to one that nowhere, no small spot of refuge, neither churches nor sanctuaries, in a country at war can be considered safe from attack. When the comparison is made with the miscarriage of artillery shells, militarism is reduced to absurdity. For in the case of a war zone the people can go away. The German theory makes the whole country virtually a war zone. Nothing would remain to be done but to evacuate the country *en masse* on the outbreak of war; but even this, if the people should knit comforts for their relatives or make shells, or in any other way help on the war, would make them liable to be sought out for attack.

The plain sense of the position surely is this. While railways and munitions factories and anti-aircraft guns may be legitimate objects of attack, the onus remains upon the raider to see that civilians are not included in the slaughter. If non-combatants are killed, it can no more be called an accident than if the State in putting a murderer to death killed all the people in the neighbourhood. If the Zeppelin came low enough it could easily avoid involving non-legitimate objects of attack. This is, of course, clear; and it is in that lies the crime of Germany. It is probably completely impossible from a height of 5,000 to 9,000 feet to hit any given spot when travelling at a great speed and when under gun fire. The Zeppelin is not therefore justified in risking it. The spot should be reckoned outside the objects of military attack. But in this, as in the case of submarines, the Germans were inclined to make the enemy suffer for the weakness and uncertainty of their weapons. Both instruments were so handicapped that they would have been comparatively innoxious if used legitimately, although in a naval engagement they had a lawful sphere of action which might yield dangerously great results.

The greatest raid of the war until then took place on January 31, 1916. A

fleet of six or seven ships left their base and travelled to England fairly early in the evening. They passed over Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire; and some of these counties seem to have been crossed and recrossed, traversed up and down, visited and revisited for hours. At least one of them crossed the coast at Norfolk about 5 P.M. and did not recross until twelve hours later. It was a foggy night, and the airships seem to have roamed about the country seeking for its vulnerable centres. The Germans claimed to have reached the Liverpool docks, Manchester, and Sheffield. They did not, in fact, touch these places; but they penetrated far enough into the country and were long enough left at large to have caused much damage to all.

In the Black Country their success seems to have been greater. In Staffordshire alone was the material damage at all considerable, and the Press Bureau summed up the results as two churches badly damaged, fourteen houses wrecked, and a "great number" less seriously injured. In two places railway property was damaged; but only two factories, neither being of military importance, and a brewery suffered badly. At one place in the Midlands a theatre, packed with people, was struck by a bomb which rolled off the roof without causing damage and burned in the roadway. One town in Derbyshire received warning at 7 P.M. of the approach of Zeppelins, and an hour later the airship or ships passed overhead. In two hours, no sound of gun firing being heard, it was thought the danger was over for the night. But when at midnight the tramcars were allowed to resume, and the town began to return to normal conditions again, a Zeppelin dropped fifteen bombs.

In all over 300 bombs were dropped, and, besides the damage already described, there were 160 casualties. These comprised 33 men, 20 women, and 15 children killed, many of them in bed and under particularly cruel circumstances; and there were 51 men, 48 women, and 2 children injured. Happily, though serious enough, this was not a heavy list for so great an expenditure of bombs, and there was very little panic. The procedure of the municipality was not always the same. In some places officials and gossip-mongers were the only ones to know what was afoot. In other places, the municipality thought it wiser to notify the people, and some strange scenes ensued. In one theatre the people when told rose and sang "God save the King." In other places hymns were sung and prayers said.

The crucial fact revealed by this most ambitious raid was that guns are very little protection against Zeppelins, which can sail at a height which makes only long-range guns of any use at all, and can choose weather conditions under which the raiders are practically invisible. Indeed, the elements seemed to be the only handicap to the success of their voyage; for while the fog protected them, it screened off the towns from above as successfully as it hid the Zeppelins from below. One airship (L 19) was found sinking in the North Sea in the early morning of Wednesday—the raiders left England on Tuesday morning. The crew was huddled on the top of the envelope, and the men called to a passing trawler to save them. But as the trawler had only a crew of nine, they thought it too great a risk to attempt the rescue of twenty-two probably armed men, and this raider, at any rate, paid the penalty of its daring. But the fact that this was the only punishment the raiders suffered roused an outcry in the country.

It could only be disquieting to think that a fleet of airships could be left free to roam the country at will during all the hours of darkness. Indeed, at one place on the coast a Zeppelin is said to have approached and remained stationary for a con-



siderable time in broad daylight, taking its bearings. There appeared to have been not only a confusion of command, but in many places there were no guns at all, in others they were practically as useless as toys, and no serious attempt seems to have been made to deal with the raiders by means of the British aeroplanes. The problem was of sufficient direct military importance to justify some claim to know whether the question was receiving adequate attention. Many newspapers seem to have been frankly endeavouring to raise a panic outcry, though Germany could, of course, desire nothing better. Aeroplanes are the eyes of the army, and unless the forces in the field have a sufficient air service, enemy concentrations could be made at selected points in such secrecy as might lead to a successful attempt to break the Allied line. An outcry for more aeroplanes might force the Government's hand to keep back from the front, or recall from the front, badly-needed aeroplanes; or, on the other hand, a loud outcry for guns might seriously retard the making of the heavy guns upon which the Allied offensive would depend.

There was also an outcry for reprisals. This was surely the weakest expedient the British could adopt. Having entered the war on the ground of right, justice, and mercy, it would ill become Britain to resort to the unworthy slaying of the civilian population. And mere reprisals, while stealing the right to speak from the ideal standpoint, would leave Britain always behindhand. She could only follow when she had been struck. If she decided that Germany had so far put herself beyond the pale that all things were legitimate to use in order to crush her, then she could set her men of science to work to devise the most cruel and effective means of killing off the noxious race. This would at least give her a military advantage, even if she lost the moral. But neither was necessary or good. There was a perfectly lawful way of dealing with the problem. In December 1914, as we have seen, a British squadron of seaplanes raided Cuxhaven. That was a splendidly conceived military expedition, and it achieved its end. If that could have been repeated time after time and the different homes of Zeppelins destroyed, the Zeppelin menace would never have arisen. But the successful raids on the hangars at Düsseldorf, Cologne, and Cuxhaven all took place in the early months of the war, and for some inexplicable reason the project was then abandoned.

The great central fact was, not that the Zeppelins had caused a lamentable loss of life and some damage to property, but that they had had England almost at their mercy for twelve hours. If they had destroyed the chief shipbuilding works, iron foundries, and munition factories, this would have been one of the most significant victories of the war. A thin veil of fog alone stood between them and their prey. This suggested so grave a possibility that it was known that questions would be asked in Parliament. The sad straits to which the British Government had drifted may be appreciated from the fact that, on the eve of what threatened to be an uncomfortable afternoon, the Cabinet improvised a plan for the air defence of the country. The feeling was apparently not so much that the air defences were inadequate, as that Ministers must be able to show that they were doing something. Mr. Tennant, who had already made frequent attempts to treat the nation as an assembly of querulous babies, was indiscreet enough to admit that "to-day is the first day that this change has been effected," and that "the actual arrangement has not been completed."

The change was that the navy was to have charge of the approaches to Great Britain, and to be responsible for preventing airships from reaching the country;

but when airships were over the land they were to be dealt with by the army authorities, of which Lord French, on his resignation of the command in France, had been made supreme. This seemed a sound plan, although at the time it was known to many that the naval authorities had not even successfully performed the duties which devolved upon them. Yet the plan had much to be said for it, though the manner of its inception and the speech with which it was made known can only be called disquieting.

The plain fact emerged from all the loose talking that the problem had not been tackled at all ; that in the spring of 1916, when the war had almost completed its second year and when there had already been twenty-five formidable air raids, not counting the raids by aeroplane, the authorities were still content to sit supine unless by outcry they were forced to action. Thus Mr. Tennant stated : " But now there was a new problem, and the very fact that it had arisen in the dimensions they saw at the present was a practical demonstration of the novel and experimental nature of the service." \* Could any statement be more glaring and stupidly untrue ? It was a commonplace of magazines, before the war, that the Zeppelins would lay London waste, and a German of real poetic power had long before published a poem forecasting what had actually happened. Mr. Balfour, who at any rate is far too shrewd a statesman to attempt such clumsy fictions, stated a conclusion to which most thinking people had been forced when he said : " I think an error was made when we deliberately, after consideration, refused to follow the German example, and try to develop lighter-than-air ships on a considerable scale. . . . We should have been better situated if we had gone in for Zeppelins eight or ten years ago." The " new " problem was, therefore, hardly as new as Mr. Tennant wished his hearers to believe.

A graver statement was that anti-aircraft guns should, for the present, have precedence over other guns in construction. But the Cabinet had sufficiently disclosed its character to disquiet people on this point, since the public could not but believe that a body of men who had only been stimulated to vigour by a loud outcry would probably fall back into its old supine way directly the clamour ceased.

Something had been achieved. Lord French had a certain driving force, and he was interviewed and questioned by the mayors of towns visited, so that he could hardly forget the question. The problem of warning the public on the approach of Zeppelins was left to local decision, and in London the police thought it better not to give warning. It was a reading of psychology that revealed the British temperament. English people would only be kept off the streets with difficulty if they knew a Zeppelin was approaching. There was another formidable raid on Sunday, 5th March, when three Zeppelins traversed Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Essex, and Kent. There were 45 casualties, 12 being deaths ; and there was a good deal of damaged property, though none was of purely military value. The net result of the new vigilance against the raiders was a chip of a propeller found in Kent.

But the Government had been sufficiently shaken up, and proceeded to appoint an influential committee to deal with the whole problem of air navigation and defence. It was characteristic that, even at this hour, after the need of first-rate scientific advice had been shown in the shortage of dyes and drugs, no man of science was included. Still the problem was being considered, and that was all that could



be achieved. It was long before the defence of London became so perfect that the Zeppelin menace was adequately met. Elsewhere the mighty drama of Verdun was being enacted, and many fronts were on the move. In face of these, the "peril that goeth by night" was forgotten.

## X. THE CAMEROON CAMPAIGN.

By the middle of January 1916 Germany had lost all her colonies except German East Africa. This fact, it was not sufficiently appreciated at the time, tended to redress the balance of the gains of the war. Germany stood upon Russian territory from Riga to the eastern edge of Galicia, and upon French territory in the north-east, and occupied almost the whole of Belgium, the whole of Serbia, and Montenegro. The balance of the war depended upon the value placed upon these territories. Germany, with her insistence upon the necessity of colonies, had lost far more territory than she had won; and, moreover, the territory she held was under the threat of deliverance, whereas nothing could give back the German colonies to her while the war lasted. In the meantime they formed a fund for bartering against the territory she held in Europe.

Cameroon was huge in extent—about 40 per cent. larger than Germany in Europe—but not healthy as a habitation for Europeans. It yielded rubber, and was capable of further cultivation. The campaign began with the usual succession of disastrous small expeditions; but in September 1914 the port of Duala had been captured by the *Dwarf* and the *Cumberland*. The enemy fell back in three columns. They had good manœuvring room, and the northern and southern columns had railways at their disposal. In another month a British column had occupied the whole of the northern railway, an Allied expedition had cleared the river-course upon which the middle column was operating, and Colonel Mayer, with a force of French Colonial troops, had pursued the southern column some distance along the southern railway. It was the railhead of this line, Jaunde, which the Germans now made their headquarters, though the small force at the disposal of the Governor was so dispersed over the colony that it could successfully defy any but overwhelmingly large expeditions.

The position was vigorously handled by Brigadier-General Dobell, who was given command of the Allied forces. The colony formed a sort of enclave in Allied territory. To the north and east lay Nigeria and the French territories of Central Africa. Three columns entered Cameroon from the first and one from the second. South lay French Congo, which sent two expeditions—one under Colonel Morrison, marching from Lunga; and the other under Colonel Hunter, moving with a river force up the Sanga; and another came from Belgian Congo. One of the perils of a converging advance over a vast trackless country was shown by the fate of the column moving upon Jaunde. Dobell had been asked by the French commander, Aymerich, in March to move upon Jaunde; but the French advance, though rapid at first, could not keep the pace, and when Colonel Mayer, with Colonel Haywood, reached Wam Biagas in May, Dobell had already been informed that effective co-operation could not be given. The Allied force from Wam Biagas marched forward on 25th May; but after overcoming an incredible resistance, was ordered to

fall back on 5th June. Thinned by constant fighting against odds, wearied by heavy marches, and overtaken by dysentery, the little force fell back. But if reinforcements had not arrived in the nick of time it could never have reached a position of safety.

On the Nigerian frontier the German force was able to undertake raids into British territory, and came near securing the little frontier port at Gurin; but



Operations in Cameroon.

when all the officers had been killed it held out, though against overwhelming odds, under the political agent, Mr. Fitzpatrick. The expedition was sent from Garua, a post in the German territory which had already the melancholy fame of having, in the first month of the war, broken a small British force. Three forts on small knolls and one in the lower ground offered a good centre for resistance, and the



commander made a daring night sortie, and eluding his pursuers made a twenty-eight hours' march through the bush and retired; but on 10th June it was surrendered to an Allied force, after a battering against which the native nerves were not proof. The little garrison of 27 Germans, under Hauptmann von Crailsheim, and 270 natives laid down their arms, and the Allied troops pressed on rapidly towards Ngaundere, at the edge of the central plateau.

It was at this place that the Germans had concentrated. It stood high, and was healthy. It had good communications by road to various parts of the colony; but it was cleared on 29th June, and the German troops fled south-west. Banyo, one of the centres to which the Germans fled, was approached from two directions by British troops. One column sweeping from the north came near the town almost at the same time that another force from Garua, under Brigadier-General Cunliffe, arrived. The Germans fell back a few miles to the south, where a small steep hill, covered with scrub and dotted with loose stone and boulders, had been turned into a very formidable fortress. It was supplied amply with maxim guns, and the defenders had also a good store of bombs. It took three days for the dogged British troops to force the hill. Little by little they crawled up, despite the terrible fire and the rain of bombs and boulders. The days were stormy, too; and the men who pressed their way up lay drenched and exhausted among the scrub to recover their strength. On 6th November the height was won, and numerous stores were captured—the Germans evidently having thought it as impregnable as a fortress could be.

The end of the colony was not long deferred after this. The French, operating from the south, had made headway in the tract of the colony of which they had been blackmailed in the Agadir crisis of 1911. The column operating along the Sanga river was helped by a Belgian river steamer, the *Luxembourg*; and while the Nigerian frontier had not been made immune from German attacks, the French had penetrated to Bertua, about a hundred miles north-east of Jaunde. This had been due to the excellent facilities offered by the Sanga and its tributaries. By the time that Garua had been stormed the French were also in possession of Lome, which lay about the same distance south-east of Jaunde, and Bertua is north-east. Jaunde was thus being approached from three directions by the French; but the coast forces did not press the advance, or the colony would possibly have fallen much earlier.

The conquest of the colony was a slow and hazardous proceeding. In many places the troops could only march in Indian file, and were continually open to ambush. Transport had to be a thing of native burdens. Water was scarce, swamps frequent, thickets almost impenetrable. Towards the fall of 1915 the converging forces began to close in upon Jaunde. The British, French, and Belgians marched from the north and east upon a rough arc from Banyo to Lome, and a concentric arc from Duala marched westward. By the end of October the coast columns had forced their way half the distance to Jaunde, and the envelopment proceeded methodically. It was unfortunate that a line of retreat was left open. The columns operating from Cocoa Beach and Campo were too weak to close the door into the Spanish territory of Rio Muni, and the German governor, Ebermaier, and the commander of the troops, Zimmermann, seized their opportunity, fleeing via Ebolowa into neutral territory. Jaunde was occupied by a British force from the coast, under Colonel Gorges, on January 1, 1916. Nine

days later the British and French had taken Ebolowa ; but the Germans had entered Spanish Muni, and were taken to Spain. The natives were taken to the Spanish island Fernando Po. A remnant of Germans surrendered, and also the small force who had withstood several desperate assaults on the hill of Mora in the extreme north of the colony.

This was the end of Cameroon, and with it perished the last colony but one of Germany. The campaign would furnish a volume of thrilling incidents ; and it was fitter matter for fiction than for mere sober history. The splendid native troops of Britain and France had fulfilled their function. They had fought with heroic bravery, undergone extraordinary hardships without complaint, and carried out a campaign of such vast magnitude with triumphant success. The co-operation of the ships of the Allies is in itself alone worthy of enduring record, and the fall of the colony was but another and stronger emphasis of the meaning of sea-power.

The German force amounted to about 3,500 at the outbreak of war, not 10 per cent. being Germans ; but some 20,000 natives were pressed into service, and the Germans of military age, amounting to about 3,000, made up a formidable army, which was ably handled by Colonel Zimmermann. The Allied force from first to last was little short of 20,000, a little more than half being French Colonial troops, and the rest, except 600 Belgians, British, chiefly the admirable West African Frontier Force. They had a huge territory to clear, its perils were many, and the end of the campaign was unsatisfactory. But the main purpose was achieved, and it is no discredit to Generals Aymerich and Dobell that they had not the instinct for this kind of warfare possessed by Botha.

## XI. SECOND WIND.

THE end of the second winter saw the Central Empires at the zenith of their power and the Allies at their lowest depth. If the Allies had accepted peace at this moment, it could only have been at the price of the admission of the greatest victory in the history of the world. Germany, by means of a campaign which had no parallel up to that time, had inflicted such losses upon Russia that she could be sure of a respite from major operations upon the Eastern front for months to come. She had broken the Allied offensive in the West, and had overrun the Balkans. The Allies had been compelled to write off the losses of the Dardanelles campaign, and had been thrown back from Baghdad into Kut and there besieged. Everywhere, except in Transcaucasia, the German grasp had tightened ; everywhere, except at Erzerum and in the African colonies, the Allies were confronted by tragic failure.

If Germany had possessed a single great statesman, if she had possessed a single mind not tainted by the madness of militarism, she would have offered a peace on reasonable terms. She would have disowned her brutalities, and have contented herself with economic concessions. By the erection of a Polish state she could have safeguarded her eastern borders and have ended the war the greatest Power in Europe. It is characteristic of her that no such counsels prevailed. Yet it is now certain that this was her best, indeed her only chance of ending the war victoriously ; for though in 1918 she seemed to be even more victorious, the war had by that time dragged on too long to yield any one anything but the shadow of victory.



The present moment was Germany's best, not only because she was then at the zenith of her power, but almost more because the balance of power was beginning to change. It is easy now to see the truth that but few realised at the time. The Allied resources, when their fortunes looked darkest, were becoming more and more available; and though Germany still had the power to fight the extraordinary campaign of Verdun, her resources were being exhausted. When she offered peace at the end of 1916 all reputable critics knew that her power was on the wane, and that of the Allies in the ascendant.

The winter of 1915-16 was one of the crises of the war. Even Russia was becoming better off as regards munitions and fighting resources generally. The Western Allies were settling down grimly to the task before them with every incentive to carry it through. With the memory of the *Lusitania* crime and the murder of Nurse Cavell in mind, it was appreciated that there could be no peace until Germany had been thoroughly beaten. In order to achieve this end the Allies began to reorganise their resources.

In November Mr. Asquith announced the setting-up of a War Committee to conduct the war more efficiently. The Derby Scheme had already been introduced. It was the last chance for voluntary recruitment, and at the end of the year the Cabinet decided in favour of conscription. This decision meant that Britain would go to all lengths to achieve victory, and its importance to the Allies generally was very considerable. Changes were also made in the command. On 15th December Sir John French resigned, and was made a viscount. He was a bold and resourceful leader, but he seems not to have had the patience and tact of his successor, Sir Douglas Haig. It is doubtful if French could have seen the British army through the crisis of 1918, when Haig showed at his best; but he was a loyal and trusted commander, and had served the Allies well. Later in the year Sir William Robertson, one of the ablest soldiers in the army, who possessed a power of grasping detail and of consecutive thought shared by few generals, became Chief of the Imperial General Staff in succession to Sir Archibald Murray, who was sent to take command in Egypt.

There had been changes in the French Government. M. Delcassé, one of the most courageous Foreign Ministers France had ever possessed, resigned on 13th October, and a fortnight later M. Viviani, who had been Premier at the outbreak of the war, followed him. M. Briand succeeded, and announced his policy as that of closer co-operation with the Allies. Attempts began to be made to effect a closer correlation of the Allied effort, and on 6th December an Allied War Council held its first meeting in Paris. A few days later a change was made in the French command. General Castelnau, who had been in charge of the French armies of the centre, became Chief of Staff and Commander of the French front, and General Joffre became Commander-in-Chief of the French armies. This change gave some relief to the general who from the beginning of the war had borne the responsibility of the defence of France.

In Russia, Ruzsky was again invalided in the third week in December. Phleve took temporary command of the northern group of armies, Gourko succeeding him in command of the 5th Army. But in February Kuropatkin, the Commander-in-Chief in the Russo-Japanese War, took command of the northern group; and Gourko, who had already shown himself a bold, enterprising, and capable commander, was confirmed in his new position.

There were thus everywhere signs of the Allies settling down to their task. In Britain it was most noticeable ; and the yielding to compulsion, which is so alien to the traditions of the race, was its most marked feature. At the end of the year the Indian Corps left France. Though it was ill suited to fighting in such a theatre, it had rendered distinguished service, and in Mesopotamia it was to add to its fame.

The fighting never wholly died down on any front, and the winter was not over before the Germans, profiting by their success against Russia, opened the remarkable campaign on the Meuse.



## BOOK III.

### GERMANY'S SECOND WESTERN OFFENSIVE.

#### I. VERDUN: THE FIRST PHASE.

ON 21st February the most remarkable series of battles in the history of the world was opened by the driving masses of German infantry against the defences of Verdun east of the Meuse. Germany everywhere could point to successes, to great advances; but she was not successful, victorious. For her the dragging on of the war meant disaster. Her powers of resistance, her general resources, could not outlast those of the Allies; hence a rapid decision was necessary for her, whereas to hold beyond a certain point automatically nursed and fostered a decision for the Allies.

In casting about for the area most favourable to a decision, the German Staff, after much vacillation, returned to the Western front. At the beginning of the war they had made choice of the Western front as the theatre in which decisive results could best be achieved; but the defeat of the Marne and the successes of Russia forced them to reconsider their plans. Russia had to be considered sooner and more carefully than had been thought, and hence the whole of the following year saw the German staff embarked upon the Eastern campaign. When Russia refused to be defeated or to agree to terms of peace, the Germans had to visualise a possible offensive in the West; and when it came in September, though it failed to break the German lines, it gave conclusive evidence of so much power of attack that the Germans came to see once for all that their main enemy lay in the West, and, by strict military theory, they should attack him and defeat him.

There were many reasons which supported this conclusion. In a war which had so great a dependence upon machines the most formidable enemy was he whose industrial and technical life was most highly developed. The Franco-British *bloc* alone deserved this description. The Germans felt fairly confident that their defensive lines in Russia could stand against all the technical preparation of which the Russians were capable. But it was otherwise in the West. France had come so near breaking the lines in September that it was to be feared that a second attempt, profiting by the experience of the first and aided by the immense resources of Britain, might succeed. Everything then depended upon inflicting a decisive blow in the West. Even if the dramatic breach of the lines which Mackensen had accomplished in the East could not be repeated, at least the offensive of the Western Allies might be forestalled. The German Staff had a sufficient realism to count such an effect a definite military achievement; for if the great offensive were anticipated it would again give the Germans the chance of taking their enemies in detail, since all the troops and munitions would not be ready, and Russia could not co-operate. And the chance of a decision was too attractive to ignore. A specialist board of investi-

gators had studied the French attack in Champagne in detail, and the Germans thought they had evolved the correct tactics for piercing modern entrenched lines. There was to be the usual intensive bombardment at the outset, and when the fortified positions had been rased patrols were to advance followed by grenadiers and pioneers; last would come the advance of the infantry. If success were not won by this familiar mode, then constant small sectional attacks were to be made. Wedges were to be driven into tactically important points, and then their leverage was to be used to break down the defence. These second thoughts were dismissed lightly, for it seems certain that the Germans intended and thought to break the French front by their first smashing blow. But if it failed, they would still be able to use the slower but surer tactics.

It is impossible to resist the reflection that current comment was wildly wrong in its estimate of the real forces involved. The obsession of entrenchments was almost universal in its sway, and the majority of military critics, in estimating the chances of an Allied or enemy advance, reduced the problem to the question of an overwhelming preponderance in heavy artillery with all other mechanical means of beating and smashing to dust concrete and steel erections, and an overwhelming superiority in man power. In effect, for months before the attack on Verdun—and the progress of the attack reinforced their conclusion—they had come to the conclusion that the war was a stalemate. The Bloch position was correct. The defensive lines which he foresaw were so formidable that no general would risk the terrible losses which would be involved in breaking them. In fine, to all practical intents they were impregnable, and any chance of Allied success depended upon the operation of the blockade and upon attacking Germany from those sections of the battle-line where the war of manœuvres was still possible—through Asia Minor or Turkey, Serbia, Austria.

Such a conclusion completely overlooked the fact, which the careful observer could hardly ignore, that entrenchments were a familiar adjunct of war, and that, in effect, war was not radically changed, the main bastions being those of the human spirit. In the critical stage of the campaign of Verdun, at the beginning of June, this was clearly shown by the Russians driving over the Austrian entrenchments to a depth of over twenty miles in a few days. The entrenchments had been as carefully erected as those upon any front, and hence the difference between them and those in Champagne and at Verdun was simply the difference in the garrison that manned them.

The selection of Verdun requires some comment. It was not a fair stretch of country over which the German armies could deploy with ease. It was a very strong place, indeed, though it had certain handicaps which the Germans hoped to turn to their advantage. The section of the line selected for attack was part of an arc the base of which rested upon the river Meuse. That would constitute a grave handicap for a hurried withdrawal, as, of course, it was a handicap in supply. Of the railways which supplied the salient, the main Meuse line was cut at St. Mihiel, the great western line was under fire, and the Revigny line could be interrupted. The Allied line sagged somewhat from the points to which Sarraïl had pushed out his defences of Verdun, and constituted a large salient. A smaller salient was formed by the arc from Consenvoye, through the Bois des Caures, Bois de Waville, Herbebois, Ornes, Morgeville, Haute Charrière Wood, Fresnes, and so via Les Eparges to St. Mihiel.



These places are not forts ; and the French Staff had quickly appreciated the dominant defect of the old fortress in offering every chance to heavy artillery by the immobility of its armament. Huge howitzers merely had to concentrate upon each small work or section of work in turn to reduce it to impotence. In frankly and completely abandoning the old theory of fortress the French adopted the more modern idea that positions vary in value, and could therefore form the nucleus of stronger or weaker defence works. Verdun had become an immensely strong entrenched position. Its crumpled hills and winding valleys, its marshy ground and wooded patches, offered splendid opportunities for skilful defence. It was upon these the defence reposed its trust.

The Germans did not underestimate the strength of the position. All through the war they had held that every position has its price ; and, served by the incomparable discipline and courage of their men, they had amply proved their contention. The very strength of the position gave it an importance in the eyes of the world such that its capture would have an immense effect upon public opinion in the Allied and enemy countries no less than among neutrals. By remaining generally passive upon the other fronts the Germans could afford great losses at Verdun, and as the casualty lists were now no longer allowed to be published in Germany, any account could be given of the losses entailed in securing so great a position.

Much depended upon keeping alive the old idea of fortresses. The German people were encouraged to believe that Verdun was a fortress in the old sense. It had, moreover, the tradition in history which attaches to places of special topographical importance. It was called the Eastern Gate of France,\* and visions of a march upon Paris were summoned up when the imaginative German mind thought of its capture. The same dynastic reasons which had given the Crown Prince the strongest army in the line and certainly the best staff, which had given him as adviser the old Field-Marshal von Haeseler, were other motives which settled upon Verdun as the scene of the new German attempt to achieve a decision. The Crown Prince was popular in Germany, chiefly by his indiscretions, his sanction and applause for everything jingo. His private and domestic indiscretions needed this popular foil. But unless he could make good his jingo utterances on the field of war, he was likely to show up badly when the pale light of defeat dawned on the horizon. It was a paramount necessity that the heir to the throne should wear the laurels whoever won them. If Verdun fell, a great moral and political success would be gained ; if it did not, France would bleed to death.

Verdun, then, was chosen as the sector, and the Germans set about their preparations with the greatest care and skill. It is customary, after the event, to say that the army attacked knew what was impending. It is a double-edged tool. It may reassure, but it may depress ; and, in fact, it is very rarely the whole of the truth. An army, if its intelligence service is competent, has a fair idea of any great concentration that is taking place against a given sector of the line. The Germans in Champagne, in September 1915, knew something was impending. But they could not have known the dimensions of the attack even roughly, or officers would never have been found asleep when the blow fell. Similarly, at Verdun, the French had an idea that the Germans meant to attack, but they could not have

\* "Strategically Verdun as the point of attack was well chosen. This fortress had always served as a particularly dangerous sally-port, which very seriously threatened our communications, as the autumn of 1918 disastrously proved." [Ludendorff, *My Memories*, p. 207.]

known how great an accumulation of artillery had been made, and they did not know whether it would be merely a light or secondary attack or the main attack.

The Germans took every means in their power to deceive the Allies as to their intentions. While the heavy artillery was being accumulated during December, from Russia and from Servia and from the rest of the front arrangements were being made for a series of vigorous local attacks over the whole front. The attacks were not to be made in great force, nor were they to be simultaneous. They were to be sharp and intense, in order that, as they were strung out over the front, a general sense of uneasiness would be felt, and no concentration of reserves would be made behind the crucial sector. These attacks may be taken to have begun in the first week of January, when various parts of the Champagne front came under attack from the 5th to the 13th. On 22nd January a furious onslaught was made against the Yser, and also at Lihons. There was an assault near Hill 140, in the Artois, the following day. A few days later the Germans snatched some local gains from the British about Frise.

The Artois attacks were repeated from the 9th to the 13th February; and there were renewed attacks on the Yser about the same time, about Frise, near Soissons, north of St. Die in the Vosges, to the east of Seppois and in Upper Alsace. Most of these assaults left small elements of the Allied line in the hands of the Germans, and at the moment it was thought that the Germans had adopted Joffre's policy of limited offensives, being incapable of a great attack. The selected points were local salients dotted about from the sea to Switzerland. On 22nd February the Yser again came under attack; there was a more serious assault, accompanied by gas, about Lihons, and in La Chapelotte, in the Vosges.

Surveying the field of war impartially, we can hardly resist the conclusion that the German plan was successful in taking the French by surprise. The main attack upon Verdun had been launched the day preceding these last assaults, and at first it was impossible to grasp which was the most important. There had been a bombardment of Verdun on the 16th, and General Herr, the local commandant, had completed the civilian evacuation of the town. On 20th February a bombardment opened on part of the sector north of Verdun. On the following day the bombardment became more intense, and was directed over the whole sector north of Verdun, between the right bank of the Meuse and the Haute Charrière Wood. Certain parts of this line came under a specially fierce fire, among them being the Haumont Wood, east of Consenvoye, Herbebois, east of Wavrille Wood, and the Bois des Caures, between the two.

Ill-used and almost meaningless expressions naturally suggest themselves when one wishes to convey an idea of this bombardment. The Germans, who had at their disposal a greater number and a greater variety of pieces, improved on the Champagne preparation. They concentrated on a smaller front, and had accumulated a greater number of guns. At 7.15 on the morning of 21st February "hell was let loose;" the short front described became an inferno. Over the three main points selected there passed for hours every variety of shell. Screaming, whistling, moaning, roaring, howling, they tore through the air towards the French lines. Nothing could withstand such a smashing. The three places selected were simply beaten to dust and raw ground. Trees uprooted, slit to bits, battered to powder; wire defences cut to strings and beaten into yawning holes; the ground torn up as though by the coarse tunnelling of gigantic ploughs, marked the places which the guns had reached.



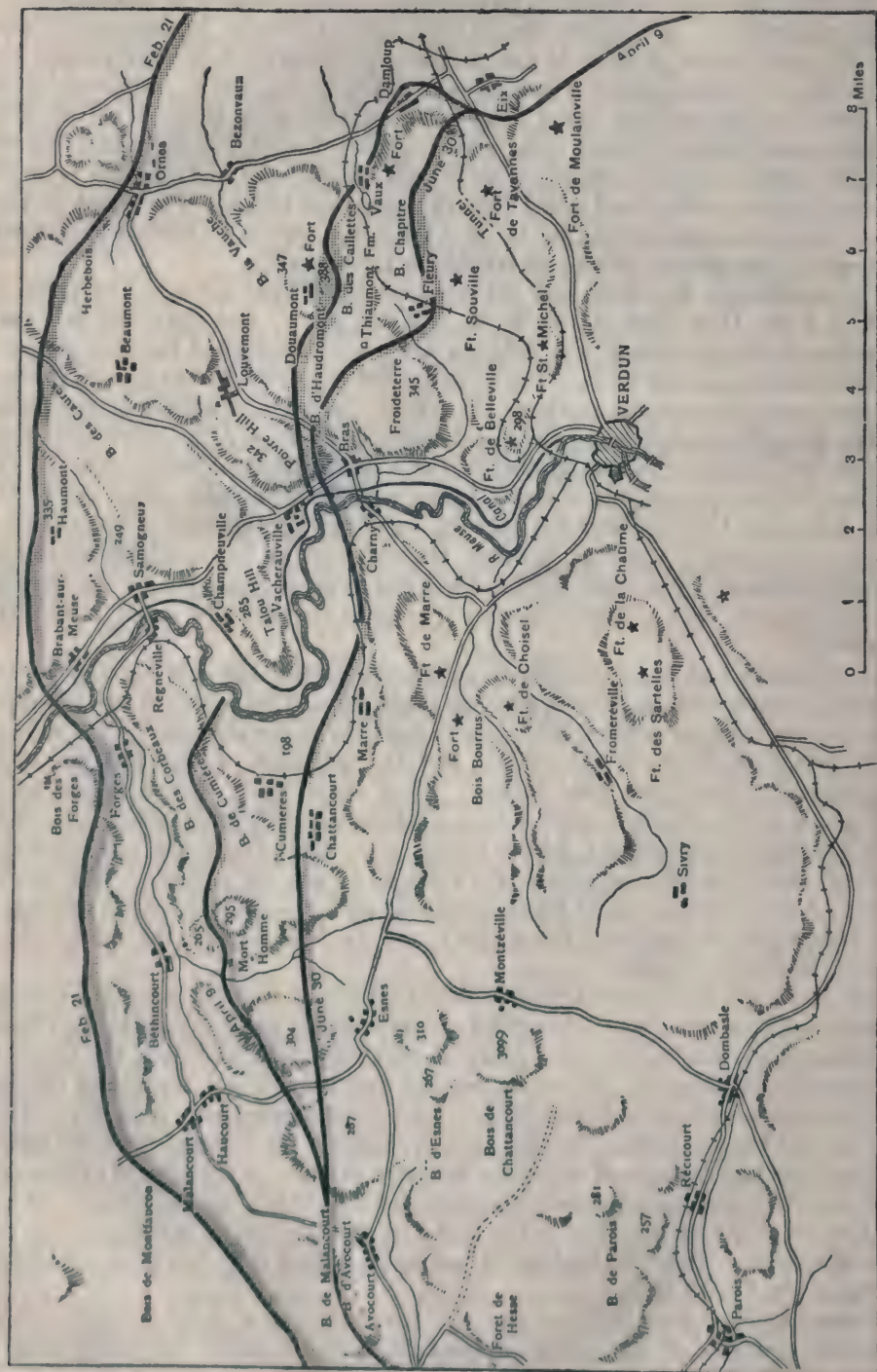
The three divisions of French Territorials remained sufficiently collected under the bombardment to know that the infantry attacks were to follow, and to seize upon the very debris of their former defences to construct new ones against the first rushes. Poisonous gas was sent across; asphyxiating and lachrymatory shells were fired; telephones were swept away; French units were isolated, cut off from the higher command. Indeed, this terrible storm of shell was successful beyond hopes in wiping out the defence. The French airmen who had too late seen the accumulation of artillery and noted that the guns were laid wheel to wheel, so that they covered huge areas behind the German lines, had expected a terrible experience, but none had imagined anything so terrible as the actuality.

The preliminary skirmishes had not deceived the French so far as to persuade them to move their general reserve to any one place; and they had not even strengthened the garrison of the defences though fifteen picked German divisions had been massed against them. The Germans did their best on the 21st to prevent reinforcements and supplies reaching the salient. A large squadron of aeroplanes and two Zeppelins had attacked the neighbourhood of Revigny, the southern railway junction for Verdun. In the air battle the French attacked and fought off the bombing German planes, and a motor anti-aircraft gun brought down one of the latest Zeppelins, L27, and inflicted such damage upon another that it turned about and made for home. This was, in effect, the only railway line available for supply and reinforcement. The main Verdun-Paris line being commanded by the German guns, could only give a precarious and spasmodic supply, and might indeed fail completely.

The Revigny line was too slight to supply adequately the large force necessary to defend Verdun, and the French, who had made detailed preparations for the supply of an army of 250,000 in the salient, had recourse to motor transport. The railway would take food chiefly if not solely. But the transport of men and munitions was allotted to the 4,000 great lorries. These would be of use anywhere where the roads were of sufficiently good service; whereas if the French relied upon additional railway lines they laid a greater strain upon labour, and in the end the motor transport would be necessary from the railhead in case of advance. The service worked almost perfectly after it began operations on the second day of the campaign. Day and night the road was never idle; and La Voie Sacrée, the Sacred Way, became the French life-line.

For ten hours the French lines had been beaten and battered when the German infantry were sent forward. The artillery lengthened its range to take in the French supporting lines, and sweep them away as efficiently as it had done the first. It was near sunset when the gray-green German masses were seen advancing through the dust and smoke in the failing light. They went forward very gallantly. They had been told it would be "the last offensive against the French," and the troops had been specially rested and fed up for the great attack. A thin line of skirmishers came first, then came the bombers and grenadiers, and then the main body. When night set in they were installed in the first French lines, and in many places in the lines of support. From Brabant-sur-Meuse to Herbebois they had made good their footing in the French lines.

**Haumont.**—The Bois d'Haumont was the scene of a fierce struggle. The defenders were cut off from support, from food, from orders; but they made a gallant stand. Little by little, however, they were driven back. In three hours



The Verdun Battle.



the Germans were on the southern edge of the wood and looking towards the village of Haumont ; and though a vigorous counter-attack was made during the night they could not be dislodged. This is to paint in water the scenes that were written in fire. The French gunners in numbers of places fired their 75's at point-blank range, shattered mass after mass of the attackers, only at length to cease when the ammunition failed and the Germans would not be denied. The guns grew hot, lost their rifling, and burst ; but the devoted gunners served their pieces as long as they could. The communications were covered, indeed smothered, by German shells, and the guns, like the men, suffered from fatigue and want of food. Many of the French prisoners were simply worn out with the prolonged strain and fast, and, unable to get back any further, lay down on the ground. The men had no supplies, but to cool their guns sacrificed their precious supply of water from the water bottles. In retiring, soldiers at times offered their back to support the machine gun fired by a comrade.

As darkness fell the Germans used their flame throwers to make the conditions even worse for the defenders. The bombardment began to include Haumont village. Heavy shells fell as rapidly as a thunder shower. Well in front of the Germans curtain fire cut off the place from all support and direction. The village, soon a heap of ruins, had to be evacuated in the night, but not before the Germans with flame throwers and machine guns were among the houses. The greatest depth of advance took place at this section of the line. Haumont Wood and village lay in German hands when the light rose on 22nd February, and Beaumont was captured at the same time. The attacks against Brabant and Herbebois were thrown back with heavy loss.

**The Bois des Caures.**—The Bois des Caures position was left among the German lines a salient with strong defences, but no life-line to the rear. The artillery bombardment paid particular attention to the position on this day, and the situation, desperate at the beginning, soon became untenable. In Haumont the Germans held the avenue of advance on the western flank ; in Beaumont they could enfilade the eastern flank. Yet the two battalions of Chasseurs who held the wood held on valiantly under their colonel, Driant. The flank attacks were accompanied by frontal assaults and an advance down the Ville road which flanks the wood to the east. The fighting became a hand-to-hand struggle, and when the defenders fell back in the evening they had exacted a heavy price for their retirement, not only in lives but still more in time. To have held up the advance for a day was an achievement of which a far larger force might well have been proud. The coolness and splendid bravery of this officer, who led his men to the charge after making an inspiring speech on the trench parapet, was typical of the white-hot spirit in which the French met the enemy.

An even more effective and valuable resistance was made by the troops in Herbebois. The first line was taken and a few points were seized in the support trenches, as they can always be with sufficient preparation ; but the Germans after that advanced step by step only, until the end of the third day, when the defenders were ordered to retire. The weather was terribly cold ; snow was falling ; food was scarce in these advanced elements of the position. Yet these dogged heroes held their ground with admirable coolness. Charge after charge by massed troops but earned the chastisement of point-blank fire. Counter-attacks were made, and although these could not redeem the lost ground they were instrumental in holding

up the advance. But Wavrille Wood was occupied by the Germans, and the position of Herbebois was critical. The men fell back with something of the sullenness shown by the British troops at Mons, who like them had inflicted deadly losses on the enemy and saw the growing piles of dead and themselves immovable.

Meanwhile, there had been great changes at other points. The French had retired upon Beaumont, where the Germans had dug a wedge into the French positions; and the edge of the wedge was broken off. The Germans lengthened the radius of their bombardment, throwing their shells across the river as far as Malancourt and as far east as Etain. But the general position was very threatening when on the 23rd the defenders attempted to launch a counter-attack from Samogneux. The village of Brabant had been evacuated, and the string of woods which were the centre of the outer defence had been abandoned. The new line ran from in front of Samogneux to a point in front of Ornes; but the counter-attack from the former was smashed before it had matured. The village was smothered with shells, and the French held it only on sufferance.

But the very extent of the German advance was beginning to introduce a new factor. The ground won from the French began to come under the enfilading fire of the French positions west of the Meuse, and the attempts to deal with this factor by the heavy artillery were not successful. Under cover of this fire the French withdrew from Samogneux and took up positions about the Hill 344 against which the driving masses of Germans moved for long in vain. The fighting was becoming too detailed to receive much assistance from the artillery, and against the massed attacks the French artillery and machine guns made great play. The positions on Hill 344 remained intact for a whole day. Ornes was meanwhile evacuated.

Between the two places a terrible struggle was being waged for the Fosses Wood and the village of Beaumont. The wood was filled with the fumes of gas and tear shells. It was peppered thoroughly with high explosive; but the defenders determined to defend their position by attack. They rushed northward on Wavrille Wood, and there stood for some time despite the terribly deadly fire. Then the Germans advanced, went through Fosses Wood, driving the Zouaves before them, and fought their way foot by foot through the village of Beaumont. The resistance seemed to wilt and waver, and the Germans drove in upon Douaumont. The French line drew back on the Talou and Poivre hills, the southern Louvemont valley, Bezonvaux, and Morgeville.

The Talou Hill, standing in the loop of the Meuse, was a position which imposed the greatest risks upon whichever side held it, and in effect it came to be held by neither.

The advance had been very significant, but not so great as had been hoped, nor so economical as had been wished. The German plans had not matured so fully as the sanguine had thought. Yet on the evening of 24th February the French had lost a considerable number of prisoners. Indeed, this was inevitable when they were withdrawing from a line that had all its connecting links destroyed. There were engaged in the German offensive over 250,000 troops, and in the first four days' advance they had suffered heavy loss. Without any exaggeration, the ground gained had been dearly purchased, and so far there was nothing of sufficiently high-sounding importance to announce in justification of so great an expenditure in men and munitions.



It was not till after the Germans had advanced thus far that the French Staff felt sufficiently sure that the enemy was really intent upon seizing Verdun to determine to throw in strong reinforcements from the main reserve. Up till this time the line had been thinly held by the men who held the position normally with certain reinforcements ; and this is sufficient commentary upon the splendid heroism of their defence against overwhelming odds of fresh troops assisted by the greatest storm of shell fire yet experienced upon any front. But by the 25th the defenders had been driven back to the main defence, the Poivre Hill and Douaumont Ridge. On this day the French Staff was sufficiently perturbed to make preparations for the worst—for the abandonment of the right bank of the Meuse. The troops in the Woëvre were withdrawn to the foot of the Meuse heights, and a considerable area of ground was thus handed over to the Germans, though so great was the respect with which the French defence had inspired them that they allowed caution to keep them in their trenches twenty-four hours after the withdrawal had taken place. This withdrawal was made to facilitate a retreat, if necessary, across the Meuse, and a large army was accumulated on the left bank to cover the retreat.

General Castelnau, the brilliant defender of Nancy who had been recently in command of the French central armies from Soissons to Verdun, and was now Chief-of-Staff and commander of the French front, was sent to Verdun to see for himself the exact state of the case and the measures that must be taken. He had full powers to deal with the situation as he thought fit, and he brought with him further reinforcements. He reviewed the position carefully, and determined to stand on the right bank. A sort of lull had set in, owing to the necessity of replenishing the stores of ammunition which had been shot away so prodigally. It seems certain that the heavy guns were not moved, though that was the current explanation of the lull in the attack. Whatever its cause it offered a good chance of organising the defence lines on the Poivre Hill and Douaumont Ridge. The general in command, Humbert, was thought incapable of dealing with so grave an emergency, and General Castelnau sent for another commander to take over control.

General Pétain, who arrived at Verdun on the evening of the 25th, was one of the discoveries of the war as he was an object lesson of the evils of the pre-war system. A devout Catholic, he held, as such, small chance of advance in the France of those days. He entered the war, therefore, as a mere colonel, one who might have passed to an unknown grave, as he was on the eve of retirement. But the conspicuously fine handling of his regiment in the confused fighting from Charleroi did not pass unnoticed, and he was rapidly advanced to a division. It devolved upon him to attack Carençay in May 1915. The trench warfare was new, and required a new tactical offensive. Pétain devised this to such purpose that he was in possession of the town in three hours. This again drew Joffre's attention to him, and he was given control of the 2nd Army, and as such was relied upon by Castelnau to help in the Champagne offensive. There again he handled his troops with conspicuous skill, capturing the Hand of Massiges with comparatively small losses. He was a consummate tactician, as his conduct of the extraordinary defence of Verdun soon proved.

Pétain arrived in time to direct the defence upon the most critical day, and his coolness, his tranquillity, his grasp of detail, decision and energy, made their presence felt. The Germans were massing to attack Douaumont plateau, which held in its keeping the fate of Verdun. The plateau was marked by the village, a redoubt, and

the old and dismantled fort of Douaumont. To the attack upon the position the Germans sent massed wave after wave of troops. Convinced that it had its price and that they could pay it, they attacked all night on the 25th-26th with a prodigal disregard of life. The gray-green masses of troops packed the ravine which cut the plateau, struggled densely up the slopes, only to meet again and again the dreadful hail of bullets from the 75's. With reckless bravery a regiment of Brandenburgers entered the fort. But in the morning Pétain set in motion a vigorous counter-attack by the 20th Corps (originally commanded by Foch and now by Balfourier, who at Nancy had won fresh laurels with the corps) that drove the Germans back from the vicinity of the fort, though they still retained a precarious foothold in it.

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It is almost impossible to convey the thrill of dismay that these rapid successes had sent about the world. In the end the majority of civilians must be at the mercy of critical interpreters. They cannot of themselves correctly appreciate the value of military movements at the time that they are made; and when censorships are in control of news, democracies tend to receive the reports doled out to them with suspicion. The German Staff profited by this to circulate coloured accounts of their achievement and of its importance. Rapidly the news was flashed round the world that, under the Kaiser's eye, the armoured modern fort of Douaumont had been taken by the invincible Germans. They announced their success long before they had won it, and the effect was to hearten their own men, impress their allies, and influence neutrals, particularly wavering neutrals.

The world, so to say, held its breath. While the German Staff was already beginning to feel that the coup had failed, the rest of the world was filled by its artistic reports of the capture of the key to the huge fortress of Verdun. As we have seen, Verdun was no fortress in that sense of the word at all. Douaumont fort represented simply more than usually good gun positions. The "fort" was a heap of ruins; its gun positions smashed to dust; the shelter of its battered stones almost wholly destroyed; its new German garrison penned in. But the world was bidden to prepare for the fall of Verdun, of which this battered work was supposed to be the key. Douaumont fort was an "armoured fortress," "the north-eastern corner pillar of the permanent main line of fortifications." The Germans had lost very heavily, and their account was not written off by the gains or by the capture of prisoners. By Saturday, the 26th, 15,000 unwounded prisoners were said to have been taken. But the French announced that this was a crude lie. Naturally, in falling back the wounded fell into the hands of the enemy, and by not paying too careful a regard to the wounds the Germans made their success seem more wonderful than ever.

The Germans were so confident of success at the beginning of the attack that they began to inflate the effect of the capture. The *communiqué* of 23rd February said that they (the Germans) were attacking "the position which the enemy has been fortifying for one and a half years with all the means of fortress construction." "Apart from considerable and sanguinary losses, the enemy lost over 3,000 men in prisoners, as well as great quantities of materials, the extent of which cannot yet be estimated." Two days later the report took on a higher tinge: "The fortified villages and farms of Champneuville, Cotelette, Marmont, Beaumont, Chambrettes, and Ornes were captured. . . . The sanguinary losses of the enemy were again extraordinarily heavy, whilst our losses were normal. The number of prisoners has been increased by over 7,000 to more than 10,000. No information can yet be given



with regard to the booty in materials we have captured." On Saturday, which was in some respects the critical day for the defence, we were informed that "considerable advances were made on the battle-front in the presence of his Majesty the King-Emperor. . . . In a fierce rush forward Brandenburg regiments pushed on as far as the village and the armoured fort of Douaumont, which they carried by storm. In the plain of the Woëvre the enemy's resistance broke down along the entire front. Our troops are closely pursuing the enemy. The capture of the village of Champneuville, reported yesterday, is based on an erroneous report."

These reports are instructive. The troops were, in fact, closely pursuing the French twenty-four hours after they had abandoned the positions in the Woëvre, and were taking villages wholesale which had to be evacuated in the same way as they had been taken—on paper. But the effect of this campaign of lies was not obscure. If the French were equal to or stronger than the Germans, why did they not stand? However much the Germans lied, they had certainly achieved a significant advance.

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For three days longer the struggle did not abate. It gathered in intensity by its concentration upon the small front represented by Douaumont village, redoubt, and fort. On the slopes leading to the fort were littered heaps of German dead. It was over these heaps that the Brandenburgers had clambered in the final rush that carried them into the ruined fort; and the subsequent days were devoted to securing the rash little band which had taken hold, but was left clinging to the position with practically no chance of supplies or reinforcements. Douaumont village, lying west of the fort, became the centre of attack. The village received the usual intensive treatment. Shells of all sorts and sizes were flung into it. It was filled with fumes, asphyxiating, poisonous, tear-producing. It was racked and torn by the noises of the vast accumulation of artillery. But the defenders protected themselves as well as they could, and when the waves of infantry began to shamle forward, they opened upon them a deadly fire from rifles and machine guns. The attackers were covered as they approached the position by a barrage of shrapnel, kept just in front. But even this did not protect them, and they were driven back, torn and shattered, in panic.

On Sunday, 27th, the Germans went forward again and forced their way into the village; but an immediate counter-attack ejected them, after hand-to-hand fighting. Similarly they captured the redoubt west of the village, only to be thrown out once more. Shattered time after time by the French artillery, which having the exact range made terrible play with the advancing masses, the Germans returned to their attack on the village the following day. They retook the village, and even seized the wood of La Caillette, east of the fort. At this point the fort was wholly and securely in German hands, and the line was straightened out. But not for long. Again the fierce counter-attacks were made, and the Germans were driven from the village and wood. On Tuesday, 29th February, the attacks were repeated, but with the same fortune. Then came a distinct interval, not merely the slight slackening which was noticeable upon the 25th, but a real pause in the frenzy and strength of assault. Never were the entrenched lines wholly silent and inactive for more than a few hours; but the peace which fell upon Verdun was like to that normal activity of all sections of the front.

The pause was significant. It was, in fact, the end of the first phase of the Verdun

struggle, and it marked the definite and unmistakable failure of the German plans. For the rest the alternative line of attack must be used, wedge tactics employed over restricted areas, if the assault was to continue. But the hope to smash in the French front as the Russians had been smashed on the Donajetz in April 1915 had failed. On the 1st day of March the French line lay in front of Vacherauville, along the Poivre Hill, across Douaumont plateau, bending to exclude the fort, north and east of Vaux to Eix, through Manhuelles, Bonzee, to Les Eparges. The map will show how considerable had been the German advance, though the ground lost on the east had been voluntarily evacuated and not under fire. Talou Hill, in the bend of the Meuse, could not be held by either side. Poivre Hill could not be forced, and the whole German position was unstable, since west of the Meuse it was commanded by the French guns installed at Forges, Regneville, and Cumières. These positions were some miles north of the new ground which the Germans had now won.

The cost of the advance had undoubtedly been most severe, and the new position was not stable. If the Germans had left the position there, it is certain the French would have counter-attacked and driven them back. Yet one success they had undoubtedly won. They had produced an effect throughout the world. Their press work was remarkably served, and the Kaiser supported it nobly, posing in the limelight for neutral edification as breathless with admiration of his troops' achievement, and particularly of the attack of the Brandenburgers. No one in Allied countries knew what to think; and it was at this juncture that dispatches appeared in the *Times* from Lord Northcliffe which did much to restore the balance. They were marked by a simplicity and directness which made them more attractive and convincing than the work of professional "special correspondents."

Lord Northcliffe had special facilities given him to acquaint himself with the true state of the case. He was able to state definitely that the disparity in casualties was very high, and that was a fact of the first importance. It was the main factor by which the German advance could be correctly appreciated, and later on, as the campaign dragged on, even Major Morahat admitted that this disparity, if it existed, was crucial to a consideration of the value of the attack. Lord Northcliffe was able to satisfy himself that the 3rd and 18th Corps were "spent;" the 7th Reserve Corps had lost half and the 15th Corps three-quarters of their strength; the 113th Division, 5th Reserve Corps, and Bavarian Ersatz Division had been "used up." These various corps represent some 240,000 men, and to have had such losses in only eight days, for an advance which though appreciable was not significant, was a point of the gravest importance. The case was documented by the evidence of actual regiments, from the testimony of prisoners who represented every part of the German Empire, and the final conclusion was that the total German casualties amounted to about 100,000 men.

It must be remembered that the heaviest bombardment of artillery upon entrenched positions *need not* entail a great loss of life. The men go to their shelters, or evacuate the battered area for support lines, and only appear when the infantry advance. But these, strung out or massed in the open, have to stand the battering of the defending artillery and the rifle and machine gun fire of the defenders. None of the French, unlike some of the Germans in Champagne, were asleep when the attack began; and they took a heavy toll of the advancing troops. Outnumbered by two or three to one at the beginning of the struggle, they inflicted a loss which was very near that ratio.



At the end of this phase the Germans had made a distinct advance and then met with a check. The nature of that check may be appreciated from a comparison of the positions at the beginning of March and the beginning of June. Though Douaumont fort had been in the hands of the Germans for a few days, Vaux fort was not taken until the first week of June. The events of the interval will be recounted later; but it is useful and necessary to notice that the line east of the Meuse practically did not change for three whole months. The Germans in Douaumont fort at the beginning of March were in a position like the bulb of a thermometer: the long narrow neck alone connected them with their fellows. The French held every other point about the fort, and so straitly shut it in that only by night could the necessary supplies reach the besieged garrison.

And little by little Verdun, perched high up above the silvery Meuse, was being reduced to dust and débris. The fine cathedral and picturesque houses, with the wooded patches intruding themselves between, began to show their honourable scars. Later on it became almost impossible to divine the plan and past shape of the Verdun buildings, to such ruin had they been reduced. It began to seem a tomb-like place. The inhabitants had been evacuated. The winding streets shut in and banked down the sound of falling shells, so that destruction did not seem so present, and one might have imagined it overwhelmed in some vast upheaval of nature, if it had not been for the order apparent in the disorderly destruction of the town. The roads and streets were kept clear, as indeed were all the roads up to the fighting line from the supply bases. The motor supply, admirably controlled, worked day and night.

The weather was bad. It was a bitter winter. Men left without food in the trenches had also to cope with ice and snow. And not only the intense cold added its terror to the campaign. The weather is always capricious in this quarter. Lord Northcliffe, in the dispatch referred to, gives one instance of this that is so remarkable we make no apology for quoting it. "The opposing French and German trenches, their parapets hard frozen, are so close that they are actually within hearing of each other. Toward dawn a rapid thaw set in. The parapets melted and subsided, and two long lines of men stood up naked, as it were, before each other, face to face with only two possibilities—wholesale murder on the one side or the other, or a temporary unofficial peace for the making of fresh parapet protections. The situation was astounding and unique in the history of trench warfare. The French and German officers, without conferring and unwilling to negotiate, turned their backs so that they might not see officially so unwarlike a scene, and the men on each side rebuilt their parapets without the firing of a single shot."

Yet it was on this strange area of shot and shell, where even nature seemed to suspend its customary amenities, that the French glory was sealed for ever. No one could ever, after these terrible days, think the French decadent. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that in them the individual spirit lived on a higher plane than among the Germans. Their glowing courage burst into flame, and annealed all that might have made for weakness. They could see at nights before their positions the bodies of the enemy wounded, frozen to death, and with vivid imagination saw the probable fate of some of their comrades, wounded in retreat. They were themselves almost frozen by the cold, half covered in snow, wet through by its thawing, smothered in dust or the refuse of their parapets, hungry, thirsty, and intolerably weary. But they held on. The men who were met upon the roads,

withdrawn for a rest from the trenches, were gaily confident and conscious of being more than equal to the enemy.

Their new commander, Pétain, was only in the fifties. A bachelor, an austere hard worker, a soldier devoted to his work, with a staff of young and energetic soldiers, represented the France which had been known so little before the war, the real France, the France of imagination and subtlety, of science, of foresight and organisation. Little by little there began to be accumulated about Verdun huge stocks of shells for every kind of gun. No risks were to be taken. If the attack were to continue it would be fought on the French and not on the German terms. Pétain took the measure of the struggle. It was to be an auction. The Germans wanted certain acres of historic and sentimental rather than strategic importance. He determined that if they were to secure them it would be at the very highest figure obtainable.

There is no need, in appreciating the extraordinary fineness of the French defence, to depreciate the valour of the attack. Indeed, the war at Verdun seemed rising to a finale. Men on both sides did the incredible, the madly foolish things for which we whimsically praise them. We should condemn rather than thrill with praise when we see 1,000 fellow-creatures tearing across a slope which is more thoroughly covered with shells than it would have been by rain in a shower. Yet we have a feeling of pity for the Germans, while the French have only our admiration. The former went forward for fictions and anachronisms, while the latter fought solely to deliver their country and Europe from the perpetual threat of war and force.

If Verdun began to resemble a German shambles, the veteran Field-Marshal von Haeseler, with death's-headlike face, presided over it in the Staff of the Crown Prince. It is said the old man very early retired from what he curtly called butchery. But the slaughter was to continue; the lies were to go on; the Crown Prince was still to chase this will-o'-the-wisp, a decision, for months. In one thing he was perhaps right. The French were probably the most serious enemies of the German Empire. Their civilisation was more akin to that of the Germans, whom they in fact excelled in scientific genius. Their country was more highly organised, and could therefore more easily respond to the needs of the hour, could turn out all sorts of artillery more rapidly, could manufacture munitions with greater speed, and so on.

And the French soldier has ever been the most brilliant in Europe. Nowhere among the German Command could one have found a trio comparable to Joffre, Castelnau, and Foch. Moreover, with all their formidableness, the French resources in man-power were limited; and naturally France, even for the sake of the Allies and for Europe, could not contemplate the possibility of the loss of all her manhood. How that question was solved we shall see later.

## II. VERDUN: THE DEVELOPMENT.

At the end of February opinion among the Allies with regard to the operations against Verdun was more settled and sanguine than at many periods later on in the struggle. After the first terrible onslaughts, with the rapid retreat of the French from positions fortified with prescient care by General Sarrail, for some days the world seemed to hold its breath. Germany set herself later sedulously to sow the



idea that she had never "intended to break the French line;" but there can be no doubt that she had hoped at first to capture Verdun, and that she came very near it. General Castelnau was able to leave Verdun for General Headquarters at the end of the month, feeling that with Pétain now in charge the worst was over, and any further readjustment in the line would be effected at such a cost that it would be, in effect, a military victory.

During the nine days of the first phase, the 13th Division of the 7th Reserve Corps, the 25th Division of the 18th Corps, and the 5th and 6th Divisions of the 3rd Corps, had all been so severely handled that they had to be withdrawn and placed in support to rest and re-form. The last corps had been used as nearly like a battering-ram as possible. They were kept in column, so that when a regiment was completely spent its place could be taken by the regiment behind. Some of the regiments of the three corps had been completely shattered, and the last four days of the month were responsible for the hardening in the defensive that made this almost inevitable. No regiment can march into machine guns and escape without heavy loss.

So March opened on a re-formed German front looking towards Verdun. Only one division of the army—so carefully trained and rested behind the German lines—was left facing the objective for which it was designed. The French centre about Douaumont had rallied. The 18th Corps, which had attempted to drive a wedge in at that point, had been so badly cut up that it no longer held the line; and having failed at the centre, the Germans were forced to follow up by attacking the wings under the worst auspices. The centre driven in, the wings would have been crushed easily; but as the centre held, the attack on the wings presented itself as a forlorn hope. Instead of being the natural development of a successful thrust against the centre, it was undertaken as a means of weakening the centre. But the Germans were not perfectly free to choose the direction from which to make their new flank thrust. The natural and best flank attack was across the plain of the Woëvre; but at this time of the year the Woëvre was a practically impassable swamp, leading to the steep Meuse heights held by the French. They had indeed withdrawn the lines from the Woëvre to the heights, so that they might no longer remain under the peril of being cut off by any German attack.

The eastern bastion of Verdun was the wall-like mass of the Meuse heights rising above Fresnes and Manheulles to the plateau of Les Eparges. Fresnes, it is true, was attacked and captured after a fierce fight; but for the rest, the eastern flank, the eastern end of the German attack in these battles, was virtually Vaux, the village and the fort.

The Crown Prince was therefore constrained to turn to the west of the Meuse, towards which the Germans had already had their attention drawn by the fierce enfilading fire that had caused them such heavy casualties in their main advance. In undertaking the attack against these new positions the Germans were broadening the front of their attack to about seventeen miles. Until this time they had been assaulting a very narrow section of line east of the Meuse, and, apart from its natural handicaps—the line of the river in its rear and the natural weakness of a salient—the defenders had every chance of concentrating against the thrust of the wedge. The Germans had, in fact, misread the lesson of the Champagne advance, as the Russians were later to show in the early days of June. It is not difficult to cope with an attack upon a restricted front, even when numbers are greatly depleted.

So persistent were the German attacks upon the Verdun front, so apparently reckless, that a general consent credited the German Command with a complete disregard of human life. In the main the view was correct. For the German Staff undoubtedly took nothing for impossible, and looked upon every desirable position as a question of so many lives. But the lives were not needlessly sacrificed. Sacrificed they were when to the Command it seemed they must be. But every precaution was first taken to reduce the risk. The objectives of an assault were covered with shells, and then strong reconnaissance detachments were sent out to determine whether the destruction had been achieved. Meanwhile the infantry were accumulated in shelters twenty to thirty feet thick, a hundred or two hundred feet from the point to be attacked. If the men ran to certain death, if they rushed to the mouths of machine guns and 75's firing point-blank, if they were met by concentrated rifle fire, this is merely because they were confronted by an enemy more than worthy of their training. And hence, when the losses from enfilading fire from across the Meuse are considered, it must not be thought that the Germans had neglected the obvious precaution of bombarding the positions west of the river with a view to silencing the deadly artillery.

From the opening of the attack on the northern front of Verdun the German guns had sent a storm of shell across the trench positions as far west as Malancourt, and at the beginning of March this increased in intensity. The natural flank of a movement towards Verdun was not, indeed, this new sector that now came under attack. If Douaumont be regarded as the centre of approach, the western flank is the Poivre Hill. So rapid had been the German advance on the east of the river that this hill had been reached by the end of February, though it lay some four miles behind the advanced line. And hence a stretch of country west of the river, four miles deep, was still held by the French, with gun positions directly commanding any approach towards the Poivre Hill. Thus, quite apart from the suggestion of well-worn tactics, the operations against the country west of the Meuse were a matter of necessity.

Poivre (or Pepper) Hill, the capture of which would make the main French position east of the Meuse almost untenable, could not be assaulted under reasonably economical conditions unless the defences west of the river were pressed back to the main lines. This followed the line of Charny Ridge, which is the natural continuation of Pepper Hill. The river made its way, as by a gate, through the ridge, leaving the village of Bras to the east and that of Charny to the west. Failure to capture Charny Ridge would mean—and we shall see that it actually involved—a change in the plan of advance against Verdun. It would constrain the Crown Prince to turn the axis of his wedge slightly towards the south-east, and to rest his chance of success upon driving the point home by the eastern flank and rear of Douaumont. Pepper Hill would have to be left in French hands, and the nearer flank could not be assailed.

The advanced French line west of the Meuse ran, at the opening of the attack, from the river opposite Brabant, westward slightly in front of Forges, thence to about half a mile in advance of the village of Béthincourt and westward to Malancourt. From this village the line dipped slightly south-west to cross the wood of Avocourt. The line from the Meuse to Béthincourt was a little in advance of the brook Forges—not by any means a strong position. It lay on some low folds that curved southward to the stream. On the northward side were no natural helps



to make the position sufficient to hold up against the German attacks, though such a reflection seems weak in view of the French stand upon sectors that seemed impossible to maintain in face of vigorous assault. It is perhaps truer to say that Pétain had determined not to hold the advanced positions which, having a stream in their rear, were subject to a grave handicap. Not more than a mile to the south the ground rose from the bed of the brook to a crest which became famous. The Côte de l'Oie, or Goose Ridge, ran into the loop of the Meuse in which the village of Regneville stands. From the village in the low land on the west bank of the Meuse the ground rises to one of the two peaks in which the Goose Ridge culminates. It is called Hill 265, from its height in metres, just as Mort Homme, the Dead Man Hill, at the other end of the ridge, is technically called Hill 295. It is all hilly country, with dense patches of woodland dotted in the crumpled ground, and the Forges brook turns south from Béthincourt and makes a pass between Dead Man Hill and the equally famous Hill 304 to the west. In front of Dead Man Hill the ground slopes and then rises again into another peak, Hill 265, and the road from Béthincourt to the village of Cumières runs across this hill and across the lower levels of Dead Man Hill.

Such was the country west of the Meuse, which for some three months attracted the attention of all whose interest was caught by this most terrible and wonderful struggle at Verdun. Dead Man Hill and Hill 304 became symbols of the French nation. They were not the keys to Verdun; these, so far as any positions could be so described in a war which could confer an invincibility upon almost any place, were farther back, on the Charny Ridge. But the eagerness of the Germans to seize the positions, and the actual announcement that they had captured Dead Man Hill, made it almost a point of honour to keep them from the possession as long as this could be economically achieved.

The bombardment of the positions west of the river at the beginning of March included the whole Verdun front from Malancourt to Vaux, but on 2nd March the intensity of the shelling of positions west of the Meuse increased. For four days the heavy fire was maintained, and then about noon on the 6th the infantry were first sent forward west of the Meuse. In a few days the Germans had captured the village of Forges, Forges Wood, Regneville, and a number of prisoners. They crossed the Forges brook and gained a footing in Crow's Wood, which lies on the lower slopes of the Goose Ridge. This was an extraordinarily good beginning, but no more. It added nothing as yet to the security of the German positions beyond the river. But the Crow's Wood was splendid cover under which to concentrate for a further advance, and with a full appreciation of this fact the French made a strong counter-attack on the 8th, recaptured the wood and went even further. On the following day they maintained their positions.

Meanwhile the enemy had been turning his attention to Vaux. The village of Vaux, a line of houses straggling half a mile up a ravine which runs up between the Douaumont plateau to the north and the plateau crowned by the "fort" of Vaux to the south, was already a heap of ruins. The ravine, the direction of which the houses followed, wound from east to west. Douaumont, village and fort, was in enemy hands. A little to the south and east the summit of the plateau was covered by the wood of Hardaumont, the bulk of which was still in the hands of the French, with the redoubts on the south-eastern edge of the wood. Covered from the north by the Hardaumont Wood, and from the south by the Vaux fort, the village of

Vaux was able to resist the first infantry attacks that were thrown against it on 3rd March. The assault was succeeded by a fierce bombardment of the edge of the Douaumont plateau, and on the 8th a fierce attack was directed against the work of Hardaumont, which was then captured.

But upon this day the whole front flamed out to a fierce activity, which continued for two days. The Germans had not yet become acquainted with the resistance that Dead Man Hill was capable of making, and it was apparently thought that the advance already made west of the Meuse with such ease presaged an easy progress under violent pressure. This was indeed far from being the case; and when the whole line broke out into more terrible fighting than had ever been witnessed before, the German Staff thought they were engaged in the final act in the victory of Verdun, whereas the situation is more justly conceived as sealing their defeat. For two days the struggle raged with the utmost violence. The Germans sent into the fight some 200,000 men. Their guns, as we have already pointed out, were more densely concentrated than ever before. The troops who had formed the shock corps of the first attack returned to the assault. They had been rested, re-formed, brought up to full strength again by drafts of the 1916 class. The extremely heavy losses in officers had been made good. The Crown Prince had addressed the men and fired them for what was thought to be the last assault.

It is undoubted there were numerous cases of indecision in the troops thus launched again and again against this terrible position. The fact was, the Germans and French were using completely different tactics. It is a known fact that when a unit has lost a certain percentage of its strength—some say a quarter, some a third—it cannot be used with confidence again. Yet, with the shrinkage in numbers and the progressive wastage, the Germans had abandoned the making of new formations, and were forced to fall back upon a wide use of drafts. Thus, while the French used numerous divisions from the reserve and from other parts of the front at Verdun, the Germans sent back time and again the old divisions, mere ghosts of themselves, that had been torn and hacked to pieces. It is reported that this led at length to a widespread refusal to go forward. German military critics consciously misinterpreted the cleavage in tactics. The French, said they, had lost so heavily that they had been compelled to use so many divisions, whereas the Germans had never used more than so many.

Under cover of the general attack the Germans had attempted to push home their wedge towards the east of Douaumont. The success, as we have seen, was so small as almost to be insignificant; and the losses were singularly heavy. The same tactics characterised the whole of the struggle that came to a climax on March 9th. Mass after mass of infantry was sent forward. The terrific preparatory shelling was supposed to have cleared the way, and as the infantry went forward the range was lengthened, and interposed a barrage between the attackers and the French. Nevertheless the Germans ran into deadly curtain fire from the French artillery and the rattling machine guns. They rarely, if ever, reached the French infantry. Whether it was up the slopes of the Pepper Hill, at Hardaumont or Douaumont, the lines were knocked to bits. Indeed, in one or two places in the Douaumont-Vaux section of the line, companies were beaten to dust as they lay concentrated before deployment. West of the river the attempt to carry the position of Dead Man Hill resolved itself into the struggle for Crow's Wood, which masked the approaches. Taken and lost again all but a small corner, the wood was to be carried finally by



the tremendous struggle of 10th March. It was smothered with shell; but the waves of infantry were shattered as completely as before. Then towards evening some 20,000 troops were thrown against this small sector of ground. The wood was won; but the cost had been so heavy that, in the lull that fell over the whole front, neutral observers were fain to see the abandonment of the attack and the admission of defeat. That the Germans had suffered a defeat in the military sense was clear; but fortunately for the Allies, they were far from admitting it.

One of the small successes they had gained in the terrible general attack of these three days must be recorded for the significant manner in which it was received. The Hardaumont redoubt was captured on 8th March, and Vaux ravine was no longer subject to enfilade fire from the north. The following day the 3rd Brandenburg Corps was sent against the battered ruins of the village of Vaux in the ravine.



Vaux and its Neighbourhood.

The preceding bombardment had been particularly heavy, and when the Germans began their attack they seem to have thought resistance was crushed. The advance guard indeed went forward in an ominous silence, not as an advance guard, but in column of fours. Thus as on parade the men advanced towards the French troops, who had taken cover in cellars and in any place which seemed to afford an inch of protection. To the last moment fire was withheld, and then the rifles and machine guns burst forth. The column was knocked to pieces, and as it came to a halt the French leaped out of their cover and finished off the enemy with a bayonet charge. The Germans bolted. Some took refuge in the outlying houses of the village, only to be bombed and grenaded out of them. An attack towards the slopes upon which Vaux fort stood met with even shorter shrift. The Brandenburgers were seen at Verdun no more. Infantry attacks were repeated against the village of Vaux on the two following days, and at length a few houses were gained at the eastern end

of the village. Towards the fort, the Germans penetrated no further than the barbed wire against which their heaps of dead testified indeed to their bravery, but at the same time to their failure.

That was the extent of their gain in this section. Yet it was on the 9th that the Germans announced that they had captured the "village and armoured fort of Vaux, with numerous adjoining fortified positions of the enemy." They were taken, it was said, "in a glorious night attack, after thorough artillery preparation, by the Posen Reserve regiments No. 6 and No. 12,\* under the leadership of the commander of the 9th Reserve Division of Infantry, General von Guretzky-Corintz." When the report was issued, not a single word of it was true. On the 10th a few ruined houses of the village were taken; but the fort was not entered until three months later. This flagrant lying was to characterise the German reports more and more as the war wore on, and it was particularly applied to Verdun. The word "glorious" is the key to the situation. "Gallant" and "glorious" are words that were frequently used by both sides to describe risky and costly operations; and no one knew better than the German Staff how rapidly German troops were being wasted at Verdun. The anxiety to announce victories was a striking symptom of the state to which Germany had been reduced. There was no other possible excuse for such an announcement. No one could possibly confuse the possession of a few ruined houses at the mouth of a ravine with the capture of the fort that crowned the height dominating the ravine.

Vaux, indeed, was attacked later on again and again, in order to make the announcement good. On 17th March five attacks were delivered on the village, and each developed into fierce hand-to-hand struggles. The short straggling line of ruins became convulsed with writhing bodies, masonry crumbled under the grenade and bomb attacks, and the crack of rifles and rattle of machine guns continually rent the air. There were two further attacks on the 18th and one on the 19th, and not one made sufficient headway to reach the wire entanglements. Over these and beyond them, indeed, lay the bodies of those who had made the first attacks. But during these terrible succeeding days the Germans were ever caught by the 75's before they reached the wire. The lie of the German Staff was left before the world as a significant measure of later reports, such as that announcing the capture of Dead Man Hill.

Out of the general attack of March 8th-10th nothing emerged that could be considered a victory, and the appropriateness of General Haig's message to General Joffre could hardly be doubted by the staffs and military students. On 10th March he sent the following telegram to the French Commander-in-Chief: "While deploring the loss of gallant Frenchmen in the great battle still raging, the British Army desires to assure you of its admiration for the heroic performances of the French Army around Verdun, where Germany has chosen to break her strength in vain against the unconquerable soldiers of France." General Joffre replied: "The French Army thanks the British Army for its expression of hearty good will which it has been kind enough to address to us while the great battle of Verdun is still in progress. In its fierce struggle the French Army is confident that it will obtain results from which all the Allies will reap an advantage. It remembers also that its recent call on the comradeship of the British Army met with an immediate and complete response." The last sentence refers to the offer made by the British

\* This brigade of the 9th Division supported the Brandenburg Corps.



at the opening of the battle to help General Joffre in any way convenient to him. The French Commander, jealous of the glory of his troops, merely asked the British to take over a new section of line.\* In this way they set free another French army—the 10th—for service with the defenders of Verdun.

The above telegrams were not made public for about ten days, and even then civilian opinion could hardly appreciate their justice of tone and sentiment. The Germans were, indeed, reaping a little fruit from the campaign of advertisement in which they had indulged for at least ten years. No one who regarded only the surface of the war could be expected to believe that this great military power, that was ever boasting its "unconquerable sword," was making a colossal blunder. The attacks continued after the bloody repulse of 8th to 10th March, and it was difficult, in the face of so pointed a fact, to believe that the Germans, so far from winning a victory, were rapidly losing all chance of it. It was pointed out by military students that the business of war is with men, and not with towns or fortresses or territory. If the Germans were losing two to every one lost by the French, then clearly the whole trend of this Verdun campaign was a French victory; and if the enemy would persevere long enough, he would lose the war on this broken ground of Verdun. Major Moraht, the sanest of the German military critics, two months later, considered this position in the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

He realised that, if the contention of the Allies and of such neutral critics as Feyler were correct, the value of the German successes would be diminished. Very naturally, he doubted the figures which he could not boldly face; and he minimised their trend by reducing the question to one of reinforcements. To determine this point he adduced the evidence of the number of French divisions which had been brought up to the front at Verdun. They had used fifty-one divisions, and the Germans less than half. Surely, from what we have said, this fact pointed in precisely an opposite direction. The Germans had used twenty-six divisions over and over again when Moraht wrote. Drafts were poured into the ruined regiments, and the men sent back once more. The French used a far greater number of divisions, and resolved that none should be subjected to too heavy damage.

The German Staff, at the time we are considering, mid-March, were, in fact, faced with this problem of shrinking numbers, and the contention of Moraht coloured their judgment more than a little. The Germans clearly saw that the war fought out on the present lines had but one end. They had seen this, indeed, for nearly a year. Their adventure in Poland was directly conditioned by it. Some one of the Allies must be put out of the conflict, either forced to make peace or rendered powerless for the rest of the war. The blow against Russia had only partially succeeded. The attack on Verdun was an attempt against France. The casualties of France had been very heavy, and the Germans thought that they could bear their losses better than France hers—that at a given point the spirit of France would waver and give way. This fundamental misreading of national temperament was quite characteristic of the Germans.

So the German attacks continued. The smallness of the results, west of the Meuse, of the assault of 8th to 10th March proved that Dead Man Hill must be taken or dealt with adequately before they could have any chance of success on the east bank of the river. On the failure of the general attack the Germans accordingly resumed local attacks west of the river, and on 14th March had secured

\* This was the 12 miles sector about Loos and Souchez which Allenby's 3rd Army now occupied.

a footing between the village of Béthincourt and Dead Man Hill, across the southern slopes of which the Béthincourt-Cumières road runs. On 15th March they first directed their attack upon this formidable mound, and seized a trench south of the road, and therefore on the foot slope of the hill. They promptly announced their capture of the hill, and thereby robbed themselves of all chance of celebrating the event when it actually fell out. A few days later, as they were making the renewed assaults on Vaux already described, they captured Hill 265, which is a lower peak of the knoll that culminates in Dead Man Hill. Here, again, the dearly-won success appeared final, and hence the Germans were driven to batter at the flank, further afield. At the end of the third week of March they turned their attention to the front about Malancourt and towards the south. The line bulged from Haucourt out towards Cheppy Wood. Between these two points lay the lower slopes of Hill 304, the master key to Mort Homme. Between Avocourt and Malancourt some 20,000 fresh troops were thrown forward with liquid fire sprayers. Malancourt Wood and Avocourt Wood were entered on 21st March. They were thus partly in the rear of the French at Malancourt and Haucourt, and they claimed to have made a heavy capture of prisoners. They seem to have had visions of taking Esnes, a village south-east of Malancourt; and if this could have been achieved, Malancourt, Hill 304, and Dead Man Hill would have proved so many traps for the defenders. The village was heavily bombarded, but the Germans had not yet learned the stubbornness of the French. From Hill 304 the advance was checked with ease and with but slight loss. The assault was continued for ten days, and the Germans tried to cut off Malancourt by their wedge tactics. At the very end of the month they achieved their first success. They gained a footing in Malancourt, securing two houses at the western end; but at the same time the French recovered the south-eastern end of Avocourt Wood, and all attempts to recapture this ground resulted in bloody repulse. The success at Malancourt was gained against a thin fringe of rearguard troops, for the French evacuated the village on 31st March. Haucourt still held out for a week, and the position of Béthincourt was not even abandoned until 8th April. Béthincourt was, indeed, in a salient, and the French not only evacuated the village, but quietly fell back from the whole northern bank of the Forges Brook. The Germans, ignorant of the fact, wasted much ammunition in bombarding the vacant positions, and when the infantry were sent forward they were cut to pieces from the rising ground south of the stream. A brigade, hurried forward to redeem the situation, was caught in flank and shattered. The abandoned ground was dearly bought.

After a month's attention the Germans had purchased at heavy cost a considerable gain west of the Meuse. Yet they were still lacking the ground that would have given them unchallenged possession of the Talou Hill and the freedom to attack Pepper Hill. During the remainder of March they had, indeed, secured the whole of Vaux village, and even part of Caillette Wood to the west of it. But on 3rd April General Mangin's division, in a brilliant counter-attack, drove them back to the northern end of the wood, and the west end of Vaux was taken. On 9th April the Crown Prince delivered a general attack on the whole front west of the Meuse, and covered it with a fresh assault on Pepper Hill and a heavy bombardment further east. It was just six weeks since the last general attack had failed before Douaumont; but the position west of the Meuse was more favourable than before. The chief weight of the assault was thrown upon the western bank of the



river, from the corner of Avocourt Wood and the redoubt across to Cumières. On this sector five divisions were used, two being fresh. The battle lasted over twelve hours, but yielded no results commensurate with the cost. The first attacks at Avocourt were crushed by a withering fire almost before they had got under way. Farther east, a thrust up the river towards Cumières secured a momentary footing, but was then broken. On Dead Man Hill slight gains were made, and a renewed attack at Avocourt gave the assailants a temporary gain. The battle continued unabated on the two following days, but then the exhausted assailants rested. The defeat was complete. On the 10th Pétain issued his triumphant order of the day: "The attacks have been everywhere broken. The Germans will certainly attack again. . . . Courage, on les aura."

Yet it was about this time that von Wiegand, the special correspondent of the *New York World*, sent to that paper a special dispatch from "the German Crown Prince's army on the front north of Verdun," which showed how little the Germans comprehended the situation. After pointing out the enormous accumulation of German guns on the front, he went on to put the problem from the German angle. "The question arises," he says, "whether the French will let themselves be shut up in Verdun as Bazaine did in Metz, 1870—which the Germans do not believe—or withdraw the bulk of their army there." Inspired rubbish of this sort accounts for the strange way in which the titanic struggle was viewed in some quarters of America. For the struggle about Verdun was as little like that of Metz as the Battle of Waterloo was like the First Battle of Ypres. The campaign about Verdun could not be compared with that of Metz, for the all-sufficient reason that Verdun was not isolated and was never near isolation. It was not a siege, or the operations preparatory to a siege; it was a series of battles against a selected portion of the fortified lines. While von Wiegand was writing trivial nonsense of this sort, most cool students of the war had already formed the conclusion that the French had indisputably won a victory. The Germans had not accomplished their object, but the French had received the price—namely, a *net* loss of a considerable number of German troops. Falkenhayn's clever plan was going astray.

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General Nivelle succeeded General Pétain about this time in command of the 2nd Army. He had like Pétain begun the war as a colonel, and secured rapid advancement. Pétain went to take charge of the central group of armies. As April dragged on the Germans continued to attack. An abortive diversion against the French positions on the plateau of Les Eparges was attempted on the 19th. There was another attempt to secure Douaumont by clearing the French from the position at Haudromont; but the two Saxon divisions employed merely captured a battalion of prisoners, and were unable to prevent the French from making a series of successful counter-attacks. They extended their hold here and about Douaumont, so that the balance of success lay with them on the east of the Meuse. Still the Germans continued their assault. There were disputes and misgivings on the German Staff. Indeed, it is said von Haeseler, one of the elder Moltke's generals, retired owing to his opposition to the continuance of the operations. There was no sign of the French giving way, and by going on with the attack the Germans were putting it beyond their power to strike elsewhere. The one hope that stayed them was that at least they were anticipating a Franco-British offensive. Earlier in the operations they had hoped to stimulate the Allies into a premature offensive;

as this hope faded, another grew—that the French would never be able to take the offensive, and that their reputed volatile spirit would give under the strain.

In the fourth week of May the French advanced by a counter-attack south-east of Douaumont fort, and the Germans turned their attention anew to the west of the Meuse. On the 21st, after a careful preparation, the French recovered Haudromont Quarry, and on the following day Mangin's 5th Division brilliantly recaptured the bulk of Douaumont fort. The victors clung to it for two days, but had then to evacuate it in face of an attack by two fresh Bavarian divisions. General Pétain had just been created Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour for his remarkable defence, and it was assumed that the Germans would abandon the operations that had proved so costly. There had been a series of attacks upon the British front that gave colour to this conclusion.

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But the attacks upon Hill 304 and Dead Man Hill recommenced. Shells of all sorts were hurled upon the hills: high-explosive shells, asphyxiating shells, lachrymatory shells, jets of liquid fire, all were flung on to the French positions. On Hill 304 these were beaten to dust, but the French artillery prevented the Germans taking possession of them. The survivors of the Pomeranians who secured a footing on the lower slopes on the 8th deserved the name of "heroic," and their foothold was precarious and temporary. Hill 287, a lower slope of Hill 304 to the west, was no more hospitable. Mort Homme was relentless. The struggle swayed across the whole front, and the ground won west of the Meuse was tactically and probably materially balanced by the French recaptures east of the river.

On the 17th a fresh series of attacks began, and by the 21st Mort Homme summit was no longer in the hands of the French. Meanwhile the German Staff had been devoting itself to another attempt to write off one of its enemies. If that against France had failed, and failed badly, the new one was to fail far more obviously and disastrously. The assault had been used by Joffre as a means of attrition. During these three months the Germans had lost at least 300,000 troops; the loss was probably considerably higher, but taking the lower figure, the result was tending to reduce the force available to man the long German lines to a critical point. A new adventure spontaneously did this at one stroke. Some 500,000 men were carefully withdrawn from the Austrian front and the interior. They were picked and rested "shock" troops, and they were sent with a vast accumulation of artillery into the Trentino. They were to strike down into the Venetian plain, cut the Italian communications, and achieve a decision over their ancient enemy. On 14th May the Austrian offensive in the Trentino began, and its first-fruits were almost all that could have been desired.

### III. A RUSSIAN DIVERSION.

WHILE the Germans were still hammering at the defences of Verdun and making up that terrible account sheet which was to lead, later on, to the removal of Falkenhayn, there were movements on the Eastern front that were not correctly appreciated at the time. The French Staff had asked the Russian army to institute a diversion on the Eastern front, and the Russians, who were ever ready to forego their plans out of loyalty to their Allies, at once prepared to attack. But the operations in March and



April must have added to the composure of the German Staff and to the assurance of the civil population. Great events were in process of preparation, and the fact that Russia struck at the northern part of the German front with so little result no doubt added to the belief in her impotence, so completely and inevitably deduced from the largely abortive action in the winter at the other end of the Eastern line.

At the moment when Russia struck it was obvious that no great movement was intended. The time before the spring thaw was not one in which any general of ability would initiate a big offensive. The ground was frozen four feet deep, and trenches could not be dug, or, if taken, modified to suit the new position without the greatest difficulty. The true meaning of Russia's action was the manœuvring for positions, the forestalling of a German offensive, which was thought to be threatened, via Dvinsk and Riga, towards Petrograd, a general determination to feel the German defences and immobilise on the Eastern front as large a force as possible. The Russian reconnaissance showed that shortly after the opening of the Verdun offensive a concentration was being made on the Dvinsk front; and though this was not known at the time, it is probable it was the price of Hindenburg's acquiescence in operations he could not approve in the West. It is the aim of every prudent general to attempt the direction of an attack which he cannot prevent. An enemy strikes at his opponent's weakest point; a defender so threatened endeavours to forestall such an ordeal by aiming a blow at the enemy's critical sector. So threatened, the enemy must disturb his concentration in order to defend, and the proposed blow either fails or is made impossible by the frittering away of the necessary forces.

Instances of such action were numerous during the war. One classical example was the first German gas attack, in May 1915, against the northern defences of Ypres. The British were maturing a blow from Festubert towards the Aubers ridge and Lille; but the attack at Ypres became so serious that every effort had to be made to avert a critical moment, and the offensive in the south was robbed of its strength, and proved abortive. And the campaign of Verdun owed its continuance, if not its inception, to this motive.

The German line above the Pripet in February 1916 was held by five armies and an army detachment. About Pinsk lay an army detachment under the elusive figure Prince Leopold of Bavaria, who appeared so oddly to parade through the streets as the captor of Warsaw in August 1915. To the north of Prince Leopold lay the 9th Army of Woyrsch to the Niemen, and the 12th Army of Fabeck to the Vilna. Below Friedrichstadt was Scholtz's 7th Army, to the neighbourhood of Vidzy. Between his army and that of Fabeck lay the 10th Army of Eichhorn, whose headquarters were at Vilna. The front defended by Eichhorn was the shortest, but its importance is obvious from this, and from the fact that it was held by the largest army. There were eleven divisions and two cavalry divisions put at Eichhorn's disposal, and two additional cavalry divisions lay behind in reserve. The general headquarters for the whole front north of the Pripet lay almost due east of Vilna, at Kovno.

The Vilna sector of the front was, indeed, the vital part of the German front. No possible offensive could be launched by the Germans if Vilna was insecure. Yet it lay, a tempting prize, but three days' march from the Russian lines. It was not supposed that it would fall an easy prey, but pressure applied in this quarter would condition the German action. It could not be ignored. Other events were shadowy

possibilities while an offensive of any significance was being directed towards the critical junction.

The Russian attack was directed on each side of the Postavy-Sventsiany railway line. To the north General Pledkoff was in command of some 120,000 men, including a cavalry division between Postavy and Lake Drisviaty; and to the south General Baluyeff was in charge of a similar force, aiming at the neck of land between Lakes Narotch and Vishnieff. Nearly the whole of this front was that critical sector which had been given to Eichhorn to defend, and the Russians had for their offensive operations perhaps a force equal to his, though not equal if the extra divisions of Scholtz operating below Lake Drisviaty be included. The Russian



The Fighting at Lake Narotch.—The Russian Advance in March.

attack necessitated the careful co-operation of General Kuropatkin and General Evert, whose armies joined on the railway line, and the army commanders of which the parts were taking the offensive were Litvinoff (1st Army, on the left of Kuropatkin) and Smirnoff (2nd Army, on the right of Evert).

The Russian attack opened on 16th March with an intense bombardment of the sector between Lakes Drisviaty and Vishnieff, and the Germans boldly retaliated by a determined assault at two points on the two following days. It was an ingenious and daring attempt to render the Russian offensive abortive; but the assaults were driven off with heavy loss, and on Sunday 19th the Russians went forward. They achieved considerable success at two points. They captured a village and drove their wedge between Lakes Narotch and Vishnieff. They carried another village



in this part of the line, and took the front trenches between Narotch and the marsh north of Drisviaty.

These successes could not be suffered with impunity, and the Germans counter-attacked with the greatest fierceness. Yet the Russians, who preferred the hand-to-hand fighting into which the battle developed, had the better of the exchange. In the first five days of their offensive General Baluyeff captured about 1,300 officers and men, with a 5-inch howitzer and a number of machine guns and mortars. Yet these were not the only successes achieved. Far north, on the Dvinsk front, holding attacks were made by Gourko's 5th Army to improve substantially the tactical positions. And there was also considerable activity near Postavy and Vidzy, nearer Lake Narotch.

Vilna was never in danger—it was never seriously threatened; but in the manœuvring for positions the Russians had improved very considerably their spring-board. And the thaw came towards the end of the month, to turn this district of lakes, marshes, and woods into an impassable swamp. The fighting was over for the time being.

The advances had been made chiefly at night; but the commanders soon saw that no serious advance could be made, and when the weather broke the sufferings of the men became very severe. In the day it thawed, while the night frost hardened the men's drenched clothes and attacked hands and feet. It says much for the Russian troops that after such experiences they were still ready to attack again on the 7th and 14th April.

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When the season had finally settled at the end of April, the Germans at once made a vigorous attack on the new Russian positions between Lakes Narotch and Vishnieff. Already the bulk of the artillery which had been lent to General Evert for the attack had been removed, and the Germans found so little reply to their preparation that they completed their bombardment with the guns in their front line, firing point-blank at the 5th Division, which held the line between Lake Narotch and the marsh. The stoical Russian infantry fell where they were posted, and Eichhorn poured five divisions through the gap. The troops had crossed their original front lines before the 5th Corps reserve struck at their right flank and forced them to retire to the lines they had held before the March attack. There the counter-attack was itself checked by the German guns, and Eichhorn's troops were left with a net gain beyond the original positions. In a few hours of 8th April the Russians had to surrender all they had won in March, and an additional strip of ground.

It was the best Russia could do as yet to assist the Allies in the West. Their artillery was still unable to cope with that of their enemy; and though the tide was gradually turning, they could only fight at a disadvantage and under grave peril until the balance was adjusted.

#### IV. VICISSITUDES IN THE EAST: KUT, TREBIZOND, SOLLUM, DARFUR.

WHILE the Germans were continuing their furious assaults at Verdun and the Russians east of Vilna were making a vain effort to relieve the strain, a moving drama was being played in Mesopotamia. The hitherto victorious 6th Division fell

back from Ctesiphon, under the relentless pressure of a superior Turkish force. Townshend had lost nearly a third of his force—690 killed and 3,800 wounded—when he reached Kut once more ; but not 400 of these casualties occurred during the retreat. If the Turks had been as enterprising in attack as they were stubborn when fighting on entrenched lines, Townshend's division need never have seen Kut again. But the coolness of the British commander and the splendid steadiness of his troops brought the little force back to write an even more moving page in history.

The men reached Kut, and began to throw up defensive positions in the first week of December 1915, as the two Indian divisions were leaving France. The river craft were sent downstream, and the cavalry all but one squadron. By 9th December the investment was complete. Nur-ud-Din summoned Townshend to surrender, and the refusal was followed by a bombardment. The garrison lay in a peninsula, lying in a loop of the river, little over a mile wide and less than twice that distance in depth. But Townshend held the liquorice factory lying across the river, west of the bend ; and in these positions the garrison were shelled all day on 9th December. The seven following days the Turks attacked repeatedly, and suffered heavy loss. Their casualties are put at over 1,000 on the 11th and 12th, and the British losses were considerably less than half as heavy. Brilliant sorties were made upon these days, and the garrison had the best of the exchanges. On Christmas Eve the arrival of the 52nd Division from the Caucasus front was announced by a furious attack which continued in gusts until the morning of Christmas Day. The Turks reached the second line defences, but were flung back by an energetic counter-attack of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. Five days later an armistice was asked for to bury the dead and rescue the wounded, and thereafter the Turks gave up the idea of carrying the position by assault, and settled down to the siege.

Marshal von der Goltz now set himself to capture the garrison, and his plan was to leave a thin investing line while throwing up defensive positions in the path by which a relieving force must advance. The ground was admirably suited to positional warfare. The country between Sheikh Saad and Kut is flat and treeless, with vast marshy areas that narrow the chances of advance to a few avenues which can be easily held by skilfully-arranged entrenchments. Only by very wide detours could the relieving army avoid the marshes and the entrenched lines, and such advances were impracticable because of the difficulty of watering the troops. Townshend at Kut, and General Lake, the commander-in-chief who succeeded Nixon outside, did not take sufficient note of the difference in the Turkish troops who now entered the struggle. Mr. Edmund Candler, the correspondent with the expedition, describes them as "the flower of the Turkish army." They came to the Tigris front with the elation of success in Gallipoli, and they were pitted against the British troops very skilfully and ungrudgingly. The old German field-marshal was content to lose Persia and to sacrifice Erzerum and Trebizond to secure this handful of soldiers in Kut, whom General Lake suffered 21,973 casualties in his efforts to relieve.

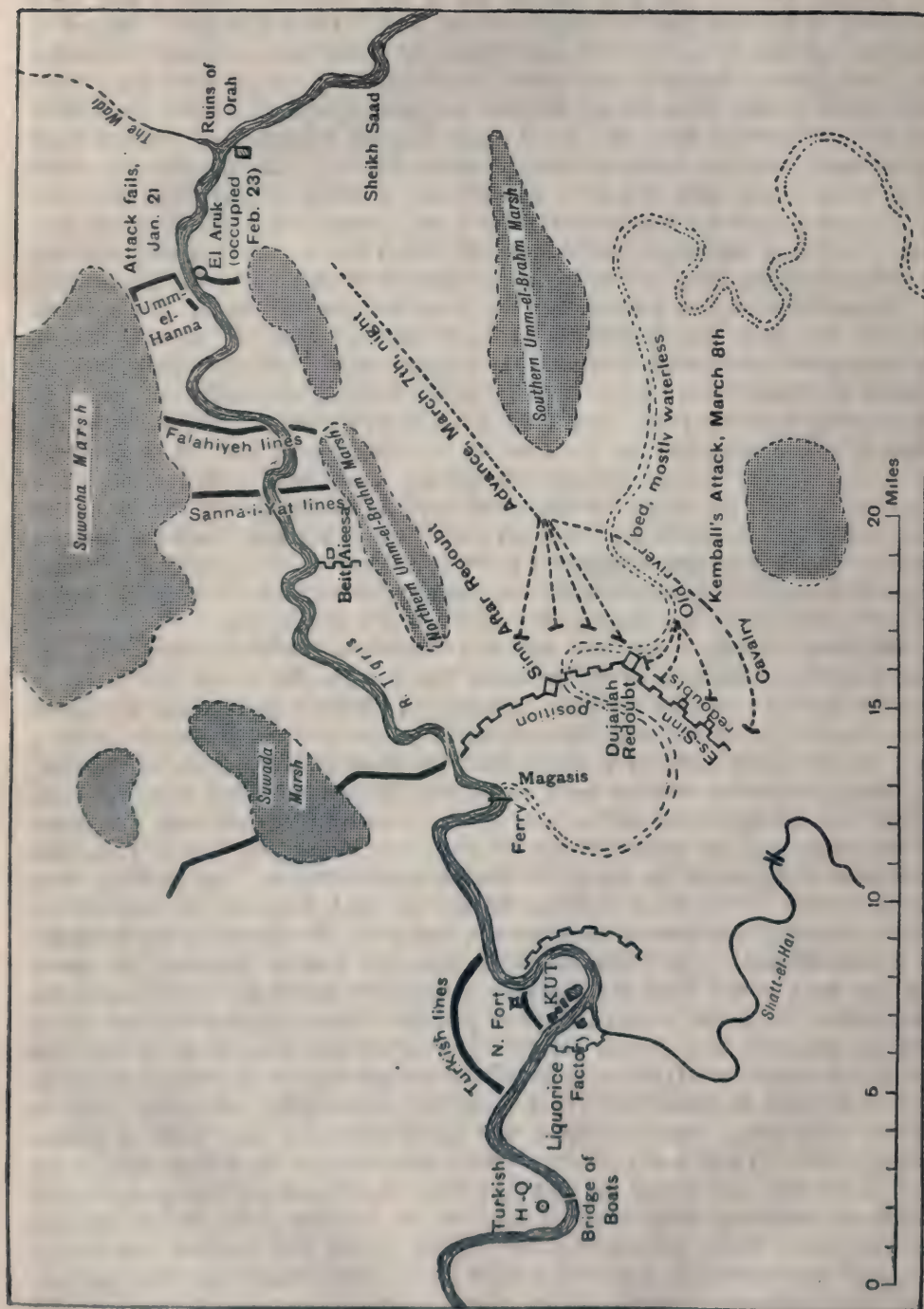
**Sheikh Saad.**—The events of the next four months make up a depressing story. Townshend had defended Chitral twenty years before, and he was ready to hold Kut to the last. But at first it seemed that this could not mean very long. Six thousand Arabs had remained in the town, and the known store of provisions could not last long. It was this fact which very largely led to abortive attacks of the relieving force. General Aylmer was ordered to advance on 5th January. The



7th (Indian) Division had just arrived, but it was without transport, and there were still no hospital ships or barges on the river. The 3rd Indian ("Meerut") Division was already on the river, and a fortnight would have doubled the striking force, and perhaps trebled its efficiency. But Townshend wanted immediate relief, and General Headquarters thought he could not hold out beyond the 15th. So Aylmer sent his force forward from Ali Gharbi, under General Younghusband, and contact was achieved with the enemy at Sheikh Saad on the 6th. Though there were still no pontoons on the river, the army had provided a bridge of boats; but there was no attempt to use them after the manner of Townshend's brilliant manoeuvre. Instead of this, a carefully articulated frontal attack was made at the same moment on both sides of the river, and the troops moving over the flat ground suffered heavily. At one moment on the Turkish left the Seaforth's saw the enemy leaving their trenches, but there was no support at hand, and the chance to advance passed. An attempt to outflank the Turks on the northern bank was not skilfully pressed. General Kemball's force on the southern bank was more successful, and captured 600 prisoners and some guns. The Turks fell back on the 9th, and the troops moved forward. The British had lost 4,262 in this first engagement, and the sufferings of the wounded were terrible beyond description. There were beds for some 250. The men had to lie out in the cold without cover, food, or attendance. The wounded who were placed in the jolting transport carts suffered torture. Into the amazing blunder which led to these sufferings it is idle to pry further. Like the blunder of the advance to Baghdad, its responsibility was shared by many, and by the extraordinary rules of to-day no one dare draw public attention to it at the time.

**The Wadi.**—From Sheikh Saad Aylmer advanced to the Wadi, where the Turks were standing in advance of the Suwacha Marsh. The borders of the marsh in January reached to within one and a half miles of the river, and Aylmer attempted to get behind the Turks, close this avenue of escape, and cut them off. After a night march on the 12th the troops crossed the Wadi on the morning of the 13th, but found themselves held up by a line of entrenchments. They were watercuts turned into defensive lines on the spur of the moment; but they were not shown on the maps, and the British troops did not know where they were. There was a vigorous engagement, in which the British again suffered. The artillery were late in arriving on the scene, and the cavalry and 35th Brigade, who were on the extreme right, did not discover their position until it was too late to cut the Turks off.

**Umm-el-Hannah.**—The Turks fell back upon the avenue between the marsh and the river, where they had carefully entrenched positions. Acting upon the assumptions which had inspired the two previous actions, Aylmer was now faced with the necessity of a frontal attack. Townshend was thought to be near the end of his resistance. It seems to have been thought that if the position at Umm-el-Hannah could be forced the Turks would not stand again before Kut; but in the event the troops were confronted with an advance over 2,000 yards of ground without cover. There was a heavy artillery bombardment from both sides of the river on the 20th, and during the night the Black Watch and 4th Dogras entrenched within two hundred yards of the Turks. When the time came for the advance the wire was found to be largely uncut, and the Turks, who had lain under cover during the bombardment, appeared at their guns. The advance over the open was, nevertheless, pressed, and the Black Watch stormed the Turkish trenches with parties of the 6th Jats, 97th Infantry, and 41st Dogras; but they could not main-



The Attempts to relieve Kut.



tain their hold, and, compelled to retire by a heavy counter-attack, they were again cut up as they fell back over the open. Rain had begun to fall at noon, and the sufferings of the men were even worse than those after Sheikh Saad. Many bled to death; some succumbed to exposure; at least a few jumped into the river to end their misery. Even on the boats there was no cover from the rain. A truce was arranged for the next day, and the British officers were able to see that whatever the Turk is in his vendettas, he is a courteous and gallant opponent in warfare.

Three days after the tragic battle at Umm-el-Hannah Townshend found large stores of hidden grain in Kut, and it became known that he could hold out much longer. The next attempts at the relief of the garrison were, therefore, postponed. At first the grain could not be milled; but millstones were dropped by aeroplane, and the besieged had a new lease of life. The 7th Division had been shattered by the three actions, and it was resolved to wait for reinforcements. The Home Government had now taken over the expedition. On 21st February a fresh attempt was made to drive the Turks from their position at Umm-el-Hannah. On the right bank the river curves northwards behind the entrenchments on the northern bank, and two mounds—Mason's Mound and Abu Roman Mound—give observation over them. It was determined to seize these mounds by a night march. This was done on 21st February, and the Turks were shelled; but although great havoc was caused by the guns, there was no attempt to cross the river until the 27th, when all the advantage of surprise had been lost.

**Dujaila Redoubt.**—The next attempt to relieve Kut provided the most dramatic episode of this tragic campaign. There can be little doubt that the plan to force the Dujaila Redoubt and, moving to their rear, to cut the Turks' communications was the one gleam of generalship the campaign showed. If it had been extended to include a march upon Kut, its very boldness might have given it success. In all, some 20,000 men were allocated to the manœuvre, which involved a night march of about eighteen miles across country. The troops assembled at the Pools of Siloam, on the right bank of the river, soon after dark, and began their long march, guided by a sapper, who had to measure his distance by his step, and keep his direction by compass and the stars. An abandoned outpost was passed in the dark, and later the columns could see the flash of the guns at Kut. An Arab encampment was traversed, and Keary's column (37th, 7th, 8th, 35th Brigades) was in a position to attack. Aylmer and Gorringe, the Chief of Staff, were with it; but the plan was to wait for Kembell's column, consisting of the 36th, 28th, and 9th Brigades, with cavalry, and this could not be deployed for attack until 7.15, nearly two hours after the time arranged. The 37th Brigade lay before a weakly-manned redoubt, and watched the Turkish reinforcements streaming in. Keary began to bombard at seven o'clock, and the chance of surprise was at an end. If he had advanced without waiting for Kembell, there can hardly be a doubt that the day would have been won. Kembell's column attacked all day from the south, but suffered heavy punishment to no purpose. The fighting on the east of the position went little better. In the afternoon some trenches were carried by a gallant advance of the 8th Brigade (Manchesters, 59th Rifles, 2nd Rajputs, and 47th Sikhs), who had left camp the night before without water. They seized a fringe of the redoubt; but when bombs and grenades failed, were ejected from the trenches. The action was broken off, and the columns retired, having suffered a loss of 3,476, officers and

men ; and it is still a moot point whether the Turks were not retiring on the 9th as the weary men stumbled back to camp.

General Gorringe succeeded General Aylmer after this action. On 5th April a fresh attempt to break through on the northern bank was made. Sixteen miles of trenches had been dug, and saps had been made up to within one hundred yards of the Turkish trenches. On this occasion, for the first time, an attack was organised with the completeness shown on the Western front. The 13th Division, from Gallipoli, was to advance without a preliminary bombardment. The wire had been cut in the days before, and when the first trenches had been entered the guns were to open upon the third position. But the Turks, leaving a third rearguard, had already fallen back to Falahiyeh, three miles to the west. The 40th Brigade there met the first real resistance ; but they dug in until night, and then the 38th and 39th Brigades broke through the lines.

**Sanna-i-Yat.**—On the two following days was fought the first battle of Sanna-i-Yat. The first attack was made at daylight on the 6th. It was thought the lines were lightly held, and that the real defence would be made on the Sinn lines. But the German commander rightly felt that Kut was near the end, and he sent heavy reinforcements eastwards. The 7th Division was heavily depleted by the cool and accurate fire of the Turks, but the troops could not get near the enemy lines. It was the same on the following day. In this first battle 2,650 casualties were suffered.

A second battle was fought on the 9th. The last hours of Kut were approaching, and it was necessary to press the action. The intention was to feint at the positions on the north bank, and attack on the south with the 13th Division. But the bridge was not ready to time, and the ground had become a swamp. The division was accordingly thrown in where the Turks had by this time inferred Gorringe was feinting. But no permanent success resulted. The attack was made in the dark of the morning. The small initial captures of trench could not be held, and another 1,700 men had gone. Thunderstorms and waterspouts followed this battle, and troops on both sides were washed out of their shelters into the open. Over the river, west of Sanna-i-Yat, lay the position of Beit Aiesa, and the struggle next broke out there. On the 15th a footing had been gained in the position. Two days later it was rushed in great style, the 1st and 9th Gurkhas following on the heels of the barrage and capturing two Turkish field guns. That night the Turks made a heavy counter-attack ; but despite the confusion due to fighting in positions not thoroughly assimilated, they were beaten off with a loss estimated at about 4,000.

On the 22nd was fought the third battle of Sanna-i-Yat. In front of the 21st Brigade the flooded ground was held to be impracticable, and the 19th (Seaforths and Black Watch), lying just north of the river, could not go straight forward for the same reason, but had to attack towards the north. This brought them to a flooded part of the Turkish trenches, and when the Turks counter-attacked they were compelled to retire. A white flag had been hoisted, and it was thought by many that the Turks were beaten when the British retired. But the battle was lost, and with the abortive attempt of the *Julnar* to run up the river with provisions the Kut garrison saw the end. The *Julnar* fouled her propeller on the steel cables across the river near Magasis. On the 29th Townshend, after destroying all that might be valuable to the Turks, capitulated with 3,000 British and 9,000 Indian troops. The men were almost skeletons after their long siege, and Townshend was



allowed to retain his sword, and treated like a hero. During the last week of the siege the daily death-rate averaged 8 British and 21 Indians.

Despite their honourable reception of Townshend, the Turks did not treat the rank and file well during their captivity. Of the British N.C.O.'s and privates 1,306 died, and 449 could not be accounted for; and of the Indians, 1,290 died, and 1,773 were not traced. Thus ended one of the most tragic episodes in British history.

**Trebizond.**—Meanwhile the Grand Duke Nicholas had been following up his success at Erzerum. The fall of Erzerum, brilliant success that it was, was but part of an ambitious plan, and the effect of its capture by the Russians was not only moral but military. It lay on the trade route which connects the Black Sea port Trebizond and Teheran. It was the centre of roads to Mush, Van, and Erzingan. The Grand Duke, therefore, had these avenues open to him, and he did not hesitate to press his success. It is true that the season was unfavourable to grand operations; but the troops who had rushed a bridge packed with machine guns in a storm could be trusted to follow up so unmistakable a success. The roads, bad at all times, with the exception of the one or two great highways, were hidden beneath snow. The thermometer registered fifty degrees below freezing-point. Yet the transport had gone fairly smoothly, owing to the splendid Siberian ponies, and General Yudenoff had numbers of men at work road-making, improving and repairing behind his advancing armies.

Apart from the season, the obstacles to the Russian advance may be briefly stated. Gallipoli had been abandoned, by one of the most amazing operations in warfare, and we may take it that Russia, not having given up the idea of Constantinople, which the Allies had agreed should be hers, had made up her mind to take it via Scutari. If that can be assumed, it was her plan to clear the whole of the Black Sea area of Asia Minor. To do this, the far more serious operation of clearing Mesopotamia had to be undertaken. The Russians could not hope to install themselves on the southern shores of the Sea of Marmora until they had dealt with the enemy on their flank. Whoever might be the final ruler of Mesopotamia—and there is evidence that Britain had her eyes upon it—the Turkish troops had to be cleared out of it. The formidableness of this project depended upon the much better communications of the Turks. The Baghdad railway had been completed as far south as Nisibin, not much more than one hundred miles from Mosul; and from Baghdad it ran about a third of the way to Mosul.

The only other railhead, at Angora, was too far away from the scene of the decisive operations to count. The Baghdad railway was covered from the north by the Taurus mountain range, which has but few gateways by which an army could pass. Once over it the plains of Mesopotamia would lie at the mercy of the invader; but in advancing from Erzerum the Russians would be abandoning their own fair communications with Kars and Sarikamish. The Persian plateau rising to a sort of rim, which geologically is probably an offshoot of the Taurus, fettered access from the east. It will be appreciated that, just as the fate of Erzerum was largely determined by the communications which fed it, any advance into Asia Minor or Mesopotamia was likewise to a great extent a matter of lines of supply. The chief subsidiary, if not the chief source of supply for Erzerum and towards Mosul, was the port of Trebizond, and it was accordingly to that direction the Russian advance looked. In taking Erzerum, the Grand Duke had followed the familiar

Napoleonic strategy of striking first at the flanks and then forcing in the centre ; and while his objective was now Trebizond, he began to develop his plans in Persia, and followed up the central success at Erzerum by pushing his troops along the Erzerum-Trebizond highroad.

They met with considerable resistance. While the Persian situation was methodically cleared up, the Erzerum force found its advance strongly resisted in the Upper Chorokh valley. Mush and Bitlis were soon taken, and the Russians thus secured at any rate a window through the Taurus. An attempt was made by the Turks, under German leadership, to turn the whole Russian position by an attack upon this flank ; but it failed, and the Russians were far too shrewd to follow up their success prematurely. They had to improve their general position before venturing to descend into the Mesopotamian plain, and the success which fell to them was largely due to the plight of the small British force which at that moment was securely penned in Kut. The Germans were too much concerned about Baghdad, the golden city of their dreams, to risk withdrawing forces to stem the advance in Armenia.

In coming to such a determination they were, in fact, gambling on a time-table. If they held out too long there, and if the Russians were not held to the north, they might be cut off. The Russian advance from Erzerum automatically cut the Trebizond source of supply. Without giving it to the invaders, it was made unavailable to the Turks. Viewing the Persian and Caucasian situation as one, three main forces could be identified. One was moving along the Trebizond road, and finding its advance resisted. Another was at the Bitlis gateway of the Taurus range. A third was sweeping towards Mesopotamia through Persia. It was when Turkey, as well as the world in general, had readjusted their ideas to this threefold Russian deployment that suddenly a large Russian force was landed under the guns of the Black Sea fleet at Atma, a small town east of Trebizond.

The whole situation was at once changed by this bold venture. Winter locked the poor roadways between Erzerum and Trebizond, and although winter had been no bar to the capture of Erzerum, no general would willingly encounter it. While the season of snows reigned there, the land nearer the coast was under the dominion of spring—not a wholly unmixed blessing owing to the inevitable thaw, but, taken with the fact that supplies could be had rapidly from the Black Sea, and that the level of the land made the passage of artillery easier, one of some value. The exact dimensions of this column we cannot tell, but as it made way against a force of some 50,000 Turks, it must have been of considerable strength.

Constantly resisted, the Russian column still made progress. At Kara Dere, a torrent flowing through a rocky defile to the sea, some fifteen miles east of the port, the Turks fought a pitched battle for five days. The banks had to be won individually, and the left offered fine positions for defence ; but on Saturday, 15th April, the river had been crossed. The following day there was a small advance, and then on Monday, the 17th, by an impetuous rush forward, the Russians entered the famous port. The Turks were still holding the Russians at Baiburt, in the Upper Chorokh valley ; but the fall of Trebizond reverberated throughout the world. With Trebizond in their grip, the Russians threatened to clear all the country east of a line through Erzingan and Diarbekr ; and once these were won, the Baghdad railway was open to a threat of severance. General Townshend was still beleaguered at Kut, and Generals Gorringe and Keary, only some fifteen miles east, could not relieve him. The days of the little British force were running to



an end. But if the Turks could secure this handful of overbold adventurers, they might still find themselves cut off and driven into trackless Arabia.

The Turks were afraid to announce the fall of the port. The sequel to Erzerum had been bad enough. When Germany was beating the Serbs to bits, the Germanic world saw in the corridor to Constantinople two different things. The Germans saw fresh supplies of needed provisions, golden corn, beloved pigs, oils, fats, rubber, and men. Oddly enough, Turkey, under a blockade herself, and with no resources comparable to those of Germany, looked forward to the new channel for foodstuffs for herself, to numbers of those invincible German legions, to long miles of wagons crowded with arms and ammunition of all sorts. Naturally, both sides of the medal could not represent the truth. In fact, neither did. Germany could spare nothing but advice, a little shell, and a handful of staff officers. Turkey could spare nothing at all. She did her bit by distracting British forces necessary elsewhere; but once in the fray she was liable to attack, and in this part of the venture the score was to the Allies.

A dispatch in the *New York World*, published about the time of the fall of Trebizond, but dated from Bukarest a month earlier, painted the conditions in Turkey as critical. The Turks are brave soldiers. There is something of glamour about them in this guise. They are careless of everything, even of life. Cruel in peace time, it must be said that they were a fair enemy. They had the faults of their somewhat volatile nature, and a month after the fall of Erzerum depression was rife in Constantinople. Refugees were fleeing before the advancing columns of Russia, bringing with them panic and disease, and exaggerating the shortness of the food supplies. There was a mutiny among the soldiers at Smyrna, and the administration thereafter attended to the feeding and pay of the army to the neglect of civilians. The army was scattered about in the impossible attempt to guard their long coastline against invasion, partly for a bluff—like the army in Syria, which was supposed to threaten Egypt; partly in Baghdad and below, to finish off General Townshend and hold the golden city; partly on the Sivas-Kharput line, to stem the Russian advance from Erzerum, Trebizond, and Diarbekr.

All the gaudy, grandiose dreams of inflaming India, of delivering Egypt and the rest, were now forgotten. The Young Turks had led Turkey to ruin, and Talaat and Enver Bey were attempting to ride the storm. In place of a reinstated power Turkey had lost practically all she ever had. Germans were triumphantly installed in the capital. Civilian Turks were united in wishing such a state of things to end as soon as possible. Murders, intrigues, want and misery, were all they had gained from their embarking upon the German adventure. The unfortunate thing for them, as indeed to some extent for the Allies, was that no half measures were possible. Their empire had to go. As Sir Edward Grey had said, eighteen months before, they had committed suicide. All that they and the Allies could hope was that the agony of dissolution would be hastened.

**Capture of Sollum.**—We left the Senussi defeated at Hazalin. As the Arabs were beginning to descend into the interior from the southern edge of the plateau, it was decided to press the operations, and on 9th February Major-General W. E. Peyton took over the command from General Wallace. On 20th February General Lukin, with the South Africans (with whom he had fought in German South-West Africa), the Dorset Yeomanry, and a detachment of Royal Scots, was ordered to take Barrani, which was to be the advanced base for the march on Sollum. Lukin

came up with the enemy at Agagia, fourteen miles from Barrani. With them were Nuri Bey and Gaafer Pasha. After a spirited engagement the Senussi were seen to waver. The Dorset Yeomanry, under Colonel Souter, were thrown in, and after a wild charge the Senussi broke and fled. Gaafer and his staff were captured, and Lukin reached Barrani two days later without further incident. He left about ten days later, with two battalions of infantry, a camel corps, and armoured cars, to cross the plateau and take Sollum in the rear, while another column marched along the coast. The enemy were found to be leaving the camps on the night of the 13th, and the Senussi capital was entered the following day. The Senussi were reported twenty miles west of Sollum, and the armoured cars under the Duke of Westminster were sent to deal with them. They met and decisively defeated the Arabs, and a few days later the cars made another dash westward to Bir Hakim, in Cyrenaica, and, after a journey of some 300 miles, found and rescued the men of the *Tara* and *Moorina*, who were almost starving. The sheikh had fled from Sollum; but the campaign was satisfactorily wound up, and the seaboard cleared of enemies.

**Skirmishes in the Sinai Peninsula.**—On the east of Egypt the exchanges were not so favourable to the British; and though there were no considerable battles, the Turks showed some real daring and enterprise. The railway from Kantara was making progress, and the Turks, who lay in some force at Bir-el-Abd, determined to check the construction by challenging the detachments who were protecting the engineers. On 23rd April three columns suddenly rushed upon Oghratina, Katia, and Dueidar (only fifteen miles from the canal) in a dense fog. At Oghratina and Katia the British were overwhelmed. At Dueidar a company of Royal Scots Fusiliers, under Captain Roberts, were standing to arms when a Turkish battalion attempted to rush the post. The attackers were forced to retire. Roberts had sent for help, and Major Thompson reached the post with two companies in two hours. A counter-attack was then made, and the Turks were routed. In the three skirmishes the British total casualties were less than the Turkish dead. It was a little earlier that Major Scott, with a squadron of Australian Light Horse, raided Jifjaffa, in the centre of the peninsula, where the Turks were boring for water. The bore-holes were destroyed and most of the Turks killed. It was by draining off the water over a wide area east of the canal that the British made any attempted crossing of the desert as arduous as possible.

**Darfur.**—Ali Dinar, Sultan of Darfur, was a bold and courageous man, as unlike Sayed Ahmed, the Sheikh of the Senussi, as possible. He had no sooner denounced British suzerainty at the end of 1915 than he began to raid the Kordofan frontier. Arabs are fickle in their friendships, and rebellion is infectious; so General Murray had to send an expedition to Darfur, which lies some three hundred miles south-west of Khartum. Its frontier is 150 miles from the railhead at El Obeid. Colonel Kelly went south with a mixed force of Egyptian troops, and in March had reached El Nahad, on the borders of Darfur. The caravan route to El Fasher, the capital, runs north-west from El Nahad, and Kelly's force made its way in easy stages by this track. On 22nd May he came into contact with the sultan and 2,600 troops at Beringia, twelve miles north of the capital. The Arabs were routed, and Ali Dinar fled to the hills. El Fasher was occupied, and the tribe was disarmed.



## V. THE AUSTRIAN CAMPAIGN IN THE TRENTINO.

ON 14th May one of the most critical episodes of the war opened. Few more fateful moves had been made up to this time than the concentration in the Trentino. And it is still strange that the German Staff could have allowed an operation that partook so much of the nature of a gamble. For the numbers of picked troops, the guns, and the material could not be accumulated in the Trentino without weakening the Austrian section of the Eastern front. It is difficult to make any great concentration in modern war without the opposing side being aware of it. The Austrians were, therefore, not only weakening their line in front of the Russians; they were also advertising the fact.

Yet the enemy had to make the most of the breathing space allowed him. It was certain that the Allied Council of War in Paris had decided upon a general offensive, and this would include an assault across the Isonzo by the Italians. Such a move might well cut off Austria's hold over the head of the Adriatic, including Pola, her chief naval base; and the moral and political effects of such a success would be considerable. To put a stop to such an offensive was a dictate of necessity; to forestall it was a counsel of prudence, if this could be achieved without incurring too great risks. Such an action offered not only the clear advantage, if successful, of preventing a possibly serious blow to their possessions; it subserved a far more considerable purpose.

The plan of the Allies was to prevent the enemy using his forces twice over, now on this front and now on that. It was to attack simultaneously on all fronts, in order to make their superiority in numbers and material tell. If one front could be forced to remain quiescent, this was to disturb not only the particular army that held that front, but also the whole of the Allies. A swift descent upon the Italians, a crippling of their offensive for the short season in which it was possible, then a return to Galicia would reap moral, military, and it might be political results. But of course its success must be assured, and clearly the whole plan depended for its value on the assumption that, at any rate for the moment, the Russian power could be ignored.

The pre-war map of Italy suggests a plan of invasion so obvious that all military students had been conversant with it for years. Indeed, the map had been deliberately so drawn by Austria for that purpose. The Trentino juts out over the plain of Venetia like a spring-board; and it was a spring-board yielding an excellent "take-off," while being almost inaccessible from the south or on its flanks. Two valleys—Val Sugana and Val Lagarina—run through the Trentino into the Italian plain, each forming a natural avenue for a river, road, and railway. Following these avenues into Italy, an army would strike the main Italian communications with the eastern boundaries, and could turn the whole of the Isonzo front by the simple expedient of cutting the life-line behind it. A force on the Isonzo would be compelled to fall back at a certain point, and it would retreat under bad conditions.

This, in brief, was the idea underlying the Austrian offensive—a plan for attack known to have been favoured for years by Konrad von Hoetzendorff, the Austrian Chief of Staff, and actually within an ace of being launched before this war while Italy and Austria were still technically allies. General Cadorna had delivered five attacks upon the Isonzo front during the previous year. They had made the

two chief Austrian centres—Tolmino and Gorizia—uninhabitable, and the bridge-head at Gorizia had been rendered innocuous by the capture of Oslavia, which commanded it from the north-west. The Italians had captured some 30,000 prisoners and a large quantity of war material. During March 1916 a fresh attack was made upon the Doberdo plateau, north-east of Monfalcone and Gorizia; but before the troops could achieve a considerable success the spring floods came to interrupt the attack. The following month saw local operations against parts of the east and west fringes of the Trentino. In the latter Colonel Giordano, with 2,000 Alpini, was able to seize by night a strong position on the flank of Val Giudicaria. The crest of the Adamello ridge, lying some 10,000 feet above the sea level, was scaled and cleared, and on the last day of April it lay securely in Italian hands. It was about this time that General Brusati, commanding the 1st Army, was replaced by Pecori-Giraldi, who endeavoured to improve the defences of the doorways from the Trentino into Italy.

Into the Trentino for some weeks before the beginning of May Austrian troops were poured, and a vast accumulation of heavy artillery was made. Some of the troops were moved long before, for at least two divisions were not seen on the Russian front later than December. The concentration was not unnoticed, and General Cadorna made his preparations to meet the attack, though he could only guess its main direction, and could not gauge its weight. All told, the infantry force was not far short of 500,000; but not much more than half of this number composed the "shock" army for the first blow. These men were carefully picked and rested troops; and they were under the command of General Kövess von Kövesshaza, one of Austria's best generals, who had been engaged in the victorious march through Poland the preceding summer. The supreme command in the Trentino was held by the Archduke (later the Emperor) Karl.

Over the short front on which they were to operate there was also a heavy accumulation of artillery. There were in all nearly 2,500 pieces, and these included 12-inch, 15-inch, and 16½-inch howitzers. The head of shells to supply them was enormous. There were about 3,000,000 shells with the guns for immediate use, and there were vast ammunition dumps farther behind. A good proportion of the troops were Alpini, mountain troops like the similar formations of the French and Italians. All had been carefully and unobtrusively concentrated in the Trentino, about the main base, Trent, for the descent upon the only weak communications of the Allies in Europe. Everywhere else the flanks of the Allies were secured by supports that could be taken as reasonably impregnable.

Trent, on the Adige, was the advanced base for both columns, as the valleys through which they were to make their way to the plain radiated from it. The Italian operations had carried the war into the Trentino, and pressed the line up to a rough arc lying from just outside Rovereto to a few miles beyond Borgo. A glance at the map will show that the greatest advance had been made up the Val Lagarina and Val Sugana, and the immediate Austrian objective was to secure these main avenues of approach to the plain. From the old frontier to Verona or Vicenza on the lateral line to Treviso and the Isonzo is not more than twenty to thirty miles, and from this northern line to the Mantua-Padua-Venice line is not more than twenty miles.

It will be seen, then, that the success of this offensive depended entirely upon the capture of the two main valleys to the plain. Without them the artillery could



approach only slowly and warily, and the Austrian plan followed the German plan for the capture of Verdun in depending much on the use of a vast concentration of artillery. The heavier guns could not move except by the railway lines. The Austrian offensive may, therefore, be conceived as a struggle for the capture of the two railway valleys from Trent, so that through them might be thrown swiftly moving columns on to the lateral lines to the Isonzo.

On 13th May a violent bombardment was opened upon the Italian positions from Val Lagarina, south of Rovereto, to the upper reaches of the Astico below Folgaria. It was clear from this that the main thrust would be down the Val Lagarina, and the heavy guns were marked down on each side of the valley as they threw their hail



Map showing the Ground regained by the Italian Counter-attack and the Austrian Front at the end of June.

of shells upon the Italian positions. The firing went on almost without interruption for two days; then on Monday, the 15th, the Austrian infantry commenced their attack upon Zugna Torta. The attack here was fiercely resisted. The height of Zugna Torta falls sheer into the Adige, and the waters soon began to receive the bodies of the Austrians who were killed or could not maintain their hold as they struggled up the slope. For two whole days the struggle went on before the Austrians were allowed to enter the village of Moscheri, at the foot of the hill.

The assault was less successful at the other end of the line. For a day the Austrians made headway up the Val Sugana; but on Wednesday, the 17th, a local counter-attack, directed with skill and carried out with great gallantry, drove them back. There was a lull over the whole of this short front on that day; but on Thursday

the attack was resumed, and the Italians were forced to abandon Zugna Torta peak, the height which commanded the advanced Italian positions on the left. On the right flank of Zugna Torta is the Col Santo, and this, with the abandonment of the ridge on the west, came under attack. At the same time the assault was resumed on the positions in Val Sugana, and Roncegno, a village marking the limit of the Italian advance, at the foot of the Armentera ridge, was stormed. After five days' offensive the Austrians had made an appreciable advance, and they claimed to have taken 13,000 prisoners, 107 guns, and 12 large howitzers. They had pressed back the Italian front between one and a half and two and a half miles; but their captures of prisoners were exaggerated. The total losses were hardly more than the figure announced as captured prisoners, and the "guns" included anything from a machine gun to a trench mortar, whether abandoned in good condition or made useless.

If we accept these reservations as nearly approaching the truth, we may judge the results of the first phase of the offensive. Heavy guns are immobile, and if placed far forward are apt to be taken if a determined advance is made. Moreover, in mountain warfare it is most difficult to avoid the loss of small bodies of men who get cut off and are forced to surrender. But the smallness of even the claim is arresting, and it proves that the Italians fought well, and probably exacted a full price for the ground they yielded. They gave not so much ground as the French in the first four days at Verdun, and their losses were not so great. Allowing for the difference of troops, the Italians still need have no shame of their performance.

Re-formed and reorganised, the Austrians resumed the offensive. General Cadorna, the Italian commander-in-chief, who had moved his headquarters towards the area of attack, kept his attention fixed upon the two railway valleys. He knew that, unless these were captured, the Austrian threat would not be critical. Borgo was not evacuated until after a severe struggle; and even after the offensive had run sixteen days, the advance in the Val Sugana had not penetrated more than six miles, while in Val Lagarina it had not achieved more than four miles. But the Austrian advance was more marked in the area between the two main valleys. The defence of the positions immediately east of Val Lagarina was most stubborn. The advance down the mountain road of Vallarsa (which runs to Schio, whence a railway runs towards the Verona line) was held up at the end of May at Chiese, and in front of the positions on Mont Pasubio. The Lagarina railway line, running almost due south and guarded by these positions, could neither be forced directly nor turned.

It was otherwise with the eastern line from Trent through Borgo. The Val Sugana, through which it runs, extends south-east and then south-west to Valstagna. As the Austrians between the two valleys were marching upon an almost easterly front from below Borgo to the Val d'Assa (at the head of which stands the railhead at Asiago, on a plateau), they were approaching Valstagna. It is clear that if this railway station could be taken or even controlled, the Italians would be unable to maintain their positions for long in Val Sugana. The railway line would be turned. In the last days of May the Austrians were approaching the towns of Asiago and Arsiero. Each of them, connected by a light line with Vicenza, was of importance for that reason. But Asiago, some eight miles or so from Valstagna, had a more critical meaning to General Cadorna.

If these two hill towns could be taken, the enemy would be but three or four miles from the Italian plain. The moral and political importance of such a success



accounts for the widespread complaints which appeared in the Italian press at this time. The military importance was simply the facility of approach to the northern of the two double lines which supplied the Isonzo front. After over three weeks' hammering and continuous attacks, the Austrian front was still held up on the two main avenues of approach to the lateral railways. The enemy had failed to take Coni Zugna peak, though he had taken the northern peak Zugna Torta on the same ridge. He had pressed only double the distance along the Val Sugana. But Arsiero and Asiago had now fallen, and the Austrians were directing several threats against the vital railway arteries. The whole of their struggle was still for good avenues to advance in ; but these were precisely what Cadorna refused them.

The Austrians were attempting to strike across the plateau from Asiago to Valstagna, to turn the Borgo railway ; they were trying to force their way up the Rovereto-Schio road, the latter town being a railway junction on the Arsiero-Vicenza line ; they were endeavouring to press across the saddle of the Zugna Torta ridge in the rear of Coni Zugna to the Adige valley. At Arsiero they were within two miles of the ridge that looks on the country falling to the Italian plain in which Schio stands. A few miles separated Austria from an important victory ; but it was at this moment that a number of local counter-attacks were initiated by Cadorna. Russia had broken through the Austrian lines towards Lutzk and towards Czernovitz. The Austrians had taken far too great a risk, and when the Italians began to be apprehensive as to their safety, when they began to see visions of disaster before them, General Alexeieff, who represented the gallantry that had so frequently in the war subordinated the individual Russian plan to the welfare of the Allies, anticipated the Russian offensive, and broke the lines in Russia and Galicia.

The revulsion of feeling in Italy was enormous. People saw the prospect as the achieved, and went wild with enthusiasm for a relief that could not have any effect for a week or two at least, and could not have full effect for a month. But it had its moral value in heartening the Italian soldiers for their counter-attack. The Austrian offensive had had one effect that was not anticipated. It found the Italians but half-hearted in the war. It left them with one mind to succeed at all costs. The threat of invasion by an enemy so well hated as Austria had turned all waverers into supporters of the war. And the change in public feeling was not long in making itself felt. A terrible storm broke out on 5th June, and it was in the midst of this that Cadorna, having checked the advance, began his local counter-attacks to pen the Austrians inside the rim of the Asiago plateau.

They had on the previous day seized the Cengio mountain, and occupied the pass through which the light railway issues towards the plain. This was the nearest point the Austrians approached to a critical success. A week of fierce fighting was necessary to recover this pass and peak, and to drive the enemy back to the saucer-like depression in the plateau in which Asiago lies. The crisis was not yet passed. A fissure that winds into the Asiago plateau on the east, Val Frenzele, leads to Valstagna. It is a narrow ravine, but it gives access to the critical station on the Val Sugana route. The Austrians seized Ronchi, at the head of the ravine ; but it was merely the head and not the gateway, and the Italians, firmly installed on the peaks north and south of the narrow valley, held it firmly. The advance was checked and a slight recovery made.

But although the Austrian line seemed to waver for a fortnight on the verge of great achievements, the heart had gone out of the offensive, and the equilibrium

struck was but that unstable adjustment before a retreat. It is almost certain that already in the third week of June the enemy staff had full knowledge of their blunder and its consequences, and were even then preparing to retire. The vast accumulation of artillery had to be patiently and painstakingly withdrawn from the threat of a sudden advance; the lines had to be cleared in the rear of the troops; positions had to be fortified; and then the Austrian troops, after a long look into those plains which in history had formed their hunting-ground, were ordered to turn back.

It is impossible in time of war to get the whole truth immediately. Stories of rout began to filter through from the pens of exuberant journalists, but the fact is the retreat was made in almost perfect order. The Austrian troops were picked men, and they had tasted the first-fruits of victory. They had been advancing continuously for a month, and were in sight of the promised land. They had, or fancied they had, achieved a moral superiority over the Italians. For the first time, perhaps, excepting in Servia or with the closest help from the Germans, they had tasted the sweets of a successful advance. Their behaviour in the retreat was a far surer proof of their quality. The *Times* military correspondent who was in Italy at the time was struck with their admirable bearing.

Nevertheless they were retiring from the positions the capture of which had entailed so much thought and preparation as well as risk. In the last days of June they had already abandoned the Asiago plateau. They had not developed the whole of their force. Some 80,000 troops of the great concentration they had made had not yet appeared in the field. But Russia's progress in Galicia was so critical that the thought of the Austrian Staff was simply to withdraw from the adventure as rapidly and cheaply as possible. The retreat itself provided no surprises. The Austrians fought several rearguard actions; but they were undismayed, and showed no signs of broken *moral*. Yet they continued to retreat, and Cadorna quietly matured his plans that had been so inopportunistically interrupted.

There was a tendency about this time to depreciate the part played by Italy in the war, and some of the Allies thought she was not whole-hearted in the cause. To some extent this is true. Relations had not been broken off between Italy and Germany. While normal diplomatic intercourse existed no longer, Italy was not technically at war with Germany, and her commercial intercourse continued. Indeed, were it not for this a vast Italian population might have starved. Italy, therefore, while adhering to the treaty not to sign a separate peace, was certainly not as wholly pledged to the war as the rest of the Allies. She had been promised tracts of country on the eastern shores of the Adriatic that could not be considered her due except by a violation of those principles of nationality which the Allies had set themselves to vindicate.

It was clear, then, that Italy had not her whole heart in the war. Yet for this we cannot blame a democratic country. If she was doing all she could to further the cause of the Allies, no more could be expected of her. This touched the crux of the doubt. She had been promised not only the Irredenta, but land that was never hers; and to the straining eyes of the greater allied nations she seemed to be doing very little, and apparently expected the other Allies to win the promised territories for her. Such a position was ill-judged, and took little account of the facts; though even if she had done nothing else but attract the Austrians to embark on the Trentino campaign in May 1916, this would have been an almost immeasurable service, since it led to the downfall of Austria before Russia.



But her service was greater than this. She was engaging from 500,000 to 600,000 Austrian combatants, and all told there must have been a million troops immobilised for the defence of this front. This was a greater number than had been left to hold the Austrian section of the Russian front when the Trentino campaign began. Apart from the soldiers there were Dankl, Kóvess, and Boroevitch, three of Austria's best generals, and numerous other officers immobilised against Italy, who were a loss to Austria in her principal rôle. It was seen later how critically this loss operated; for Austria attempted to call these leaders to the Russian front, with the results that might have been expected.

The mere record of numbers gives but little impression of the fighting in this region. The Alpini, Italy's famous mountain troops, fought with splendid courage and skill. Their contribution was the native instinct and craft of the child of high mountains. But they were aided and supported in their warfare by the latest applications of science. Imagine what it meant to scale and hold these high peaks. Some of the troops would be entrenched on the very summit, while their only means of supply and reinforcement would be steel trolley ropes from neighbouring heights. Across the intervening ravine cradles of food would ply to and fro; men would be sent, and would return after long and trying vigils. For months many of the men were surrounded by snow, and some of them had it always about them. Perched high on these isolated summits they would be sought out by the Austrian howitzers firing out of sight, perhaps over higher summits from concealed galleries.

The snow became pitted and marked with holes. At times a huge mass of rock would be dislodged by the explosion, and would fall down the mountain sides, gathering impetus on its way. The emplacements of the howitzers were contrived by the engineers, who also constructed the roads through the mountains. Smaller guns were drawn up the mountain sides in sections; some were carried by mules, which also supplied the head of ammunition which fed the guns. This service was in places performed by women, who, with baskets on their back, painfully picked their way up the steep mountain side. And the isolated observation posts on mountain tops were ever kept in control by the telephone communications.

Some of the mechanical achievements are worthy of enduring record. A gun which with its platform weighed forty-six tons was taken up and mounted on a peak of 9,000 feet in twelve hours—a feat that in time of peace men would have declared to be impossible. There were motor lorries which could carry a heavy load, and traction engines that could defy steep gradients. These with the cradles slung and drawn across chain cables met most of the requirements of this novel system of warfare. The organisation of these Alpini, so readily assumed by people outside Italy, was an achievement of much careful thought and ingenuity. They were formed into brigades much stronger than ordinary divisions; but their training and spirit encouraged a high level of individual initiative. Bold and self-reliant, when well supplied they were the best troops of the sort in Europe.

They were provided with axe or alpenstock, with skis or rackets, and for ordinary service wore a special kind of mountaineering boot, well heeled with nails. Straw shoes and felt uppers were their climbing footwear, and each carried a small portion of spirit to heat a drink in emergency. Frequently they wore white furs and overalls, and in the snow were almost indistinguishable. Different as were the conditions on these mountains from those of the trench warfare on the plains, there was still the same positional warfare until the Austrian offensive struck; and the skilfully

made Italian trenches were often within hail of the enemy lines. Their defences, however, had to change with the seasons. Here, as in the Carpathians, huts could be dug in the snow in winter which, protected by barbed wire, were sufficiently strong to impose a check. But in summer the protection had to be dug from the earth. A blow between the seasons was the Austrian device for achieving an immediate success, and it must be said they achieved it.

And when the Austrians fell back we can hardly say their onset had been in vain. They had intended to anticipate the Italian offensive across the Isonzo. Their aeroplanes were active during the advance; and the retirement began in the second week in June, when the Italian counter-concentration was observed to be complete. Our judgment as to the failure of this campaign depends upon a comparison between the threat of an advance across the Isonzo and of a Russian advance in Galicia. With some finer foresight the Austrians could have strengthened their Isonzo reserves without depleting so disastrously the Russian line. And when all is said, how far can we balance the possibilities on the Isonzo with those in Galicia? The loss of Trieste, and even of Istria, would not be half so important, either immediately or by implication, as the loss of 400,000 troops. The blunder was one of over-confidence.

Yet, if the Austrians merely wished to check an Italian offensive across the Isonzo, they achieved a great deal. For the season in which a great offensive can be conducted is not extensive, and Cadorna was unable to begin the expected Isonzo offensive until the beginning of August.

## VI. THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND.

### I.

THE most remarkable naval battle in history was surrounded by circumstances which were themselves sufficiently uncommon. The stake at issue was, it is probable, no less than that of the war. Whatever may have been that "enterprise directed towards the north" upon which the German navy was bent, the issue of the war had come to turn more and more upon the successful maintenance of the blockade. The military issue must eventually turn chiefly upon man-power; but while resources were undiminished, the enemy, even with a decreasing army, could hold on almost indefinitely. The financial situation, bad as it was, was far less crucial than that of the Allies. The closed system, the beleaguered fortress in which the Central Powers stood, gave scope for unlimited internal makeshifts; while the Allies, compelled to buy abroad, were at the mercy of neutral exchanges. The German people were made of stern stuff, and accepted—though not without murmuring—hardships and privations that would have ruined the cause of the Allied democracies.

But cotton—cellulose, that is to say—is grown, not made, and the enemy countries were prevented access to fresh stocks. Wood fibre, which is also cellulose, was practically unusable, since it would have necessitated new plant. Cellulose in some form is necessary for the manufacture of high explosive. Nitre, picric acid, not to say metals and rubber and petrol, were also necessary for the making of munitions of war and the use of them. The British navy kept these out of Germany. It also kept out foodstuffs, though a certain amount filtered across adjacent neutral



frontiers. But by allowing such neutrals to do what they would in this respect, by refusing to threaten and bully them, the Allies in the end achieved a fair approximation to the state of things they desired, and avoided the creation of the ill-will which Germany produced in Switzerland by her bullying methods. For Dutch dealers, seeing fortunes within their grasp, sold their cattle with such avidity that soon Holland was threatened with a shortage, and was compelled to put her house in order.

The shortage of food was bound to come to a climax in the early summer, before the harvest was gathered. The people of Germany were disposed to put up with great privations; but there were certain privations that the harvest would not redress. There was no harvest of meat and fats, and the state of the civilian population must react upon the army, even if the soldiers' rations were not affected. The food shortage was a far more powerful *moral* weapon than any wielded by Germany at the time, and it might, as the shortage of war material *must*, at a certain point affect the military situation. The sort of influence it was likely to have was a certain limitation of the duration of the conflict. And this was crucial to the situation. For even the Allies could hardly go on for ever; and the need of peace was almost as imperatively felt among them as among the Germans.

This is but one side of the naval problem. While the British navy closed the doors of Germany so effectively, it equally effectively brought the world's marts to the doors of the Allies. As America pointed out at one period of the submarine controversy, the neutral markets were open to all, not more to the Allies than to the Germanic Powers. But the buyers were under the necessity of taking the goods home. The Allies, under the eye of a supreme navy, could effect this in peace and security. The Germanic Powers could not do so, and in effect were therefore unable to buy abroad. More than this. It was, of course, a decisive factor that the Allies' resources should be virtually the world's; but it was equally decisive that the Allies should have perfect freedom to move their armies in the way that their interior lines gave to the Germans. British armies had to be removable at will from Britain to Salonika, to Egypt, to Mesopotamia; French armies were needed in Salonika, and were brought from Algeria; Italian forces were operating and supplied in Albania; Servian armies rested in Corfu were transferred to Salonika; Russian forces in the spring of 1916 came from the East half round the world to France.

It will be appreciated that unless the blockade was broken the Germans could not win the war. A stalemate was the best they could expect. An invasion of England might, some heated German imagination might think, compel Britain to keep her forces, or some decisive part of them, at home. A force of German cruisers let loose in the Atlantic might relax for a time, possibly a decisive time, the blockade, or weaken the British navy to challengeable proportions. Either of these projects may have been in the German mind that planned the sally of the German fleet on the last day of May. Or it may have been the desire to take the British cruiser fleet by surprise and by an overwhelming attack reduce the British fleet to more modest limits. What the project was will not be known for some time yet; but it was probably one of the three, and more probably one of the first two.

The chances are less obscure. A force of cruisers set loose in the Atlantic might have given the Germans their stalemate peace, or even a negotiated peace favouring them. "The war map" to which about this time the German Chancellor appealed as the test of battle, carefully ignoring the sea and the lost colonies, was sufficient,

presumed stable, to persuade the Allies to terms. A considerable force of cruisers was occupied in the search for the *Emden*. What if half a dozen battle cruisers escaped? The chances of invasion were small. The invasion must have been annihilated almost at once; and the moral of the episode would neither have encouraged Germany nor discouraged Britain. The smashing of the Battle Cruiser Fleet *might* have given the German fleet its "day;" but in face of the capable handling of the battle fleet in action, the day would have had no very bright morrow even if we are to assume that Admiral Beatty would walk into a German trap. But if a German success offered some advantages, we must notice that a German defeat might be decisive. Any offensive against Russia, if such a move could still be contemplated after the losses of Verdun, would be made by the Germans, and almost certainly towards Petrograd. But if the Baltic could be opened by the annihilation of the German navy, the offensive could not expect success. Russia could be re-munitioned with ease and speed, and the chances in the East would fade away.

This, then, was the atmosphere in which Admiral von Scheer brought his fleet out of port early on 31st May, on what the official German report later stated was an "enterprise directed towards the north." Tirpitz had been succeeded by Capelle, and the change, as many thought, indicated more than a change in the submarine policy. Ingenohl had given place to von Scheer, who took out his ships on this desperate adventure. It was a strange day. The North Sea has many moods, and this day found it in a characteristic one. Patches of mist drifted about like thick curtains. At one moment ships might be clearly seen ten or twelve miles off; the next they would disappear in the mist. One might steam confidently ahead for an hour into the vague and apparently empty seas ahead; then in a moment strange ships would stand out where nothing had been seen before, hardly two miles off.

Admiral Jellicoe had brought out his fleet on one of the periodical sweeps of the North Sea. Scheer's ships left their harbour probably half a day later than the British fleet. Ahead steamed the destroyers, tearing the water into foam. After this host of hornets the clean-cut line of light cruisers came, and then the lordly battle cruisers steamed majestically with their formidable guns. Well behind was Scheer with his slower moving battleships, attended also by destroyers and cruisers, and apparently submarines. Hipper, the admiral of Heligoland Bight fame, led the van, a battle cruiser flying his flag.

The British Battle Cruiser Fleet, under Admiral Beatty, was somewhat similarly disposed, though his attendant craft were cutting the waters in a wide sweep all round him. He had with him, besides six battle cruisers, four of the new fast battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class that mounted 16-inch guns, the heaviest guns afloat. Admiral Beatty was steaming in a southerly direction opposite, though far west of Jutland Bank, when at 2.25 P.M. he was informed of the presence of a large force of German ships somewhere north of his flagship, *Lion*. A little later he ordered a seaplane to go up and ascertain the strength and composition of the German force, and by 3.8 the new arm had made its *début* in an engagement. Admiral Beatty had meanwhile steamed in an easterly direction, to interpose his fleet between the Germans and their base. By 3.30 the seaplane had reported, and the main opponents had come within sight of each other.

Admiral von Hipper had five battle cruisers to Beatty's six, and the British had the formidable *Queen Elizabeth* with them. At 3.48 the firing began between Beatty's battle cruisers and Hipper's chief ships, the range being ten and a half miles and the



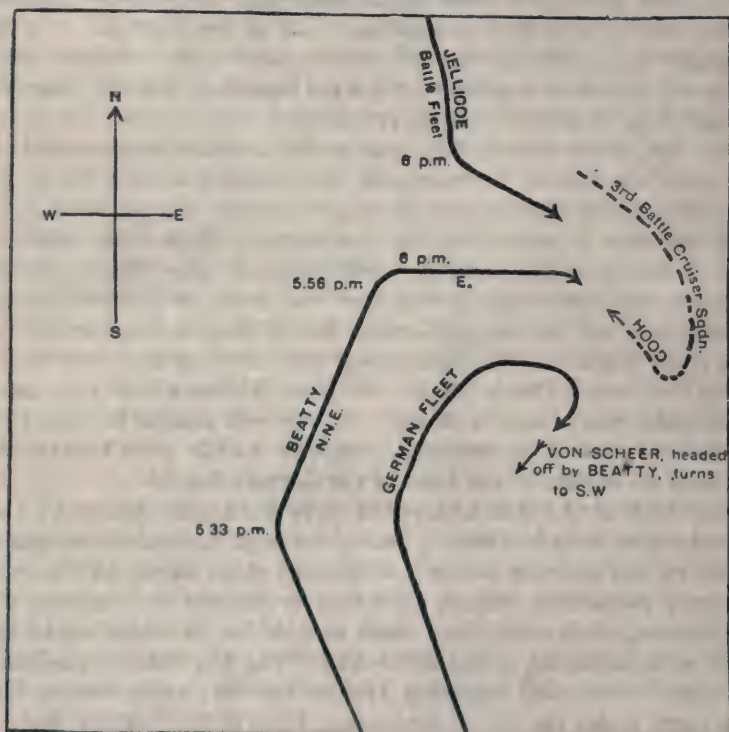
visibility apparently very fair. Hipper had turned about, and was steaming south-east towards his base; Beatty setting a parallel course a little farther south, and therefore a little nearer the German bases. Twenty minutes later the 5th Battle Squadron—*Barham* (flying Rear-Admiral Evan-Thomas's flag), *Warspite*, *Valiant*, and *Malaya*—came into action, opening fire at something over eleven miles' range at the rear enemy ships. The British destroyers also attacked the battle cruisers after driving off the German destroyers. For just over an hour Beatty and Hipper fought a duel—a very unequal duel for the Germans, though they seem to have had all the luck, for it was at this stage that *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable* were sunk. At 4.6 P.M. a salvo struck the latter at the outer edge of the upper deck level in line with the after turret, exploding a magazine; and as the ship fell out of line sinking she was caught by another salvo, turned over, and sank. Twenty minutes later *Queen Mary* was struck by a salvo, a magazine exploded, and she disappeared. The ships had only been in action about forty minutes.

Under the fire of the British ships that of the Germans deteriorated in accuracy and speed, while the British fire remained steady and precise. The long discipline stood the strain where that of the conscript German seaman fell off. The third enemy ship was seen to take fire; but the German ships lying still to the north began to show mistily in the distance. Fifty minutes after Beatty had engaged he received reports that the main German fleet was ahead, and recalled his destroyers. Almost immediately afterwards the German Battle Fleet was sighted south-east, and the British ships turned to the right-about and steamed northwards to draw the enemy on to the British Battle Fleet. Sir John Jellicoe was at this time steaming south. His speed was of course slower; but he was careful to report that it was well beyond what was to be expected. Hipper, a little after Beatty, changed his course and took his station at the head of the German line.

When we think of the difficulties that have been encountered by the splendid British merchant service in time of peace, we must not miss the quality of this simple phase of the gigantic battle: a hundred ships or so, all steaming at high speed, carefully performing almost incredible evolutions to bring them into their true battle courses, while many were under terrible fire, or others, under the thunder of the guns, were hastening to enter the fray. The 5th Battle Squadron was for a little on the old course and battering Hipper heavily; then, turning later on the new course, came under the fire of the leading ships of the German fleet. The light cruisers fell into positions about the battle cruisers, and so the action went on with the ships steaming towards Jellicoe and the mightiest battle fleet ever seen on any waters. For one hour Beatty had to bear the bombardment of all the enemy ships in range; but his speed was superior to that of the pursuing vessels. The British ships now lay westward of the Germans, and thus silhouetted against the horizon of the setting sun showed up clearly, whereas the German ships were seen only at intervals through the mist.

It is a remarkable thing that this phase of the action was fought apparently without any loss to the British. With all the advance in gunnery control and ranging, modern science has not kept pace with the scientific development of the most primitive art involved in sea-fighting seamanship. There has been no development sufficient to enable manœuvring ships to be ranged and hit with sufficient accuracy and speed. The fight in this phase was waged at a range of 14,000 yards. The German Battle Fleet and the British Battle Cruiser Fleet were aiming at each other, and yet the losses

seem to have been disproportionately small. A German battle cruiser, possibly the *Seidlitz*, was seen to quit the line in a badly damaged condition, and a number of the leading German ships were severely punished. But the enormous weight of shell expended was sufficient probably to sink the whole of both fleets. The cruiser *Moresby* seems to have got home a torpedo on one of the German ships. Beatty, a little before 5.35, had begun to steer north-north-east, thus tending to turn the enemy's van; and as the British Battle Fleet was a little west of north, he turned gradually north-east, keeping his range at 14,000 yards. The Germans were turning eastward, probably having sighted or having received information of the neigh-



Battle of Jutland: the Junction of the British Fleets. Beatty heads off von Scheer, who turns and retires south-westward before the combined fleets.

bourhood of the leading ships of Jellicoe's fleet. Turning in this way, his leading ships came under a heavy fire.

At 5.50 British cruisers were sighted to the north, and when, six minutes later, the leading battleships of the British fleet were sighted five miles to the north, Beatty turned east and went in that direction at his highest speed. Only three of the German battle cruisers were still in the line with the battleships behind when Beatty executed this manœuvre and signalled the position of the enemy to Jellicoe. By means of this movement Beatty turned the van of the German fleet and enabled Jellicoe to come in between the enemy and his base. It was while Beatty was steaming on his new course that the destroyer *Onslow* attacked with her guns, at a range of from 4,000 to 2,000 yards, a light cruiser attempting to torpedo *Lion*. Coming



under short-range fire from the German battle cruisers, she closed with one, probably the *Derfflinger*, and fired her torpedoes. Heavily damaged, she still held on to torpedo the first light cruiser engaged, and then had to retire. The destroyer *Defender*, herself seriously damaged, approached the *Onslow* in a hail of shells, took her in tow, and the two limped home together after many mishaps.

Meanwhile Admiral Beatty had been under fire two and a half hours, and Sir John Jellicoe was steaming to meet the enemy at the highest speed his ships could muster. In the van was Rear-Admiral the Hon. Horace L. A. Hood, with the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron—*Invincible* (the flagship), *Inflexible*, and *Indomitable*. The two first were the heroes of the Falkland Islands victory. He had been ordered ahead to strengthen Beatty's fleet. He steamed off south-east by east, heading for Jutland Bank. At 5.30 the flashes of gunfire and the sound of guns were detected in the south-west. The *Chester* was sent forward to investigate, and finding itself in the thick of the German van, it engaged three or four German light cruisers with skill and gallantry at about 5.45. The casualties were heavy, but the spirit of the men under such heavy fire was remarkable. John Travers Cornwell, a boy of not sixteen and a half years of age, gained immortal fame during the encounter. He was fatally wounded almost at the outset; yet he remained standing alone at a most exposed post, the gun's crew, dead or wounded, lying about him, quietly awaiting orders, till the end of the action. He died shortly afterwards, but was posthumously awarded the V.C. for his splendid behaviour. About this time the destroyer *Shark* was sunk, despite the attempts of the cruiser *Canterbury* to save her by attacking the German cruiser.

Hood was rejoined by the *Chester* at 6.5. He had sailed south of Beatty, and had already turned north-west to meet the Battle Cruiser Fleet, and to escape from the dangers into which he had steamed through the mist. The Battle Cruiser Fleet was sighted at 6.10, and Hood brought "his squadron into action ahead (of Beatty's line) in a most inspiring manner." Steaming north-west he had not offered too great an end-on target to the Germans; but on turning east to take the van of Beatty's line he lay south, broadside on to the German line, at a distance of some 8,000 yards. Beatty changed course to east-south-east to go to Hood's assistance; but eight minutes later this gallant sailor, who had rendered the Allied armies such assistance with his monitors off the coast of Belgium, went down with *Invincible*. She had come under a terrible fire, and had turned south and west to escape somewhat and get home a return blow. The wreck of the vessel was passed half an hour later by Jellicoe in the *Iron Duke*.

While Beatty was endeavouring to help the luckless Hood, who had suffered from the deceitful weather, Jellicoe to the north-west had caught the sound of guns. He was steaming in a south-south-east course, and gun flashes gleamed in an arc stretching from right head to the westward. But no ships could be seen through the mist, and the position of the enemy's battle fleet could not be accurately determined. The armoured cruisers ahead had entered action by 5.55, and a light cruiser which came under their fire was later seen to sink. This was apparently the *Rostock*. When Hood was steaming to join Beatty, the British battle cruisers were seen from the main fleet lying ahead and towards the west of Jellicoe's line. The crucial moment was approaching. The German sailors, or so it was said, had even in time of peace toasted "the day" when they should meet (or perhaps it was with a reservation as to equal terms, or perhaps it was when they should conquer?) the British fleet.

All Beatty's manœuvring had been to draw this moment nearer. Beatty signalled the position of the enemy battle cruisers, and later of the battle fleet. But when contact took place it was found that the position as given by the Battle Cruiser Fleet was twelve miles out.

It was at this historic moment, when Jellicoe was forming the battle fleet in line of battle under a heavy fire, when within a small area there were perhaps three hundred vessels of all sorts steaming and manœuvring at high speed, that Sir Robert Arbuthnot was seen steaming between the British and German battle fleets on the *Defence* and accompanied by the *Warrior*. It seems that he, too, had been trapped by the mist. In engaging enemy light cruisers he suddenly found the main fleet before him. He drew a terrific fire upon himself, and *Defence* sank. *Warrior* was disabled, and would probably have been sunk had it not been for the gallant and most skilful action of *Warspite*, which steamed about the cruiser, hurling forth the shells from her 16.5 guns, until her steering gear was wrecked and she had to get away as best she could. *Warrior* later on sank, after being towed for some distance. The third ship of this squadron, *Black Prince*, sank a little before 9 p.m.

The enemy ships were never seen more than a few at a time through the mist; and visibility became reduced, though the advantage, Sir David Beatty was careful to note, remained with the British. Before the British Battle Fleet deployment was complete it had already been discovered that the German nerves were wearing thin. At 6.25 the 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron, steaming ahead of the Battle Cruiser Squadron to the north-east of the enemy, attacked a German battle cruiser with torpedoes, and the heavy underwater explosion felt almost immediately afterwards seems to show that one went home. They then attacked with gunfire with impunity themselves. And it is to be noted that all the main loss of the British had already occurred, whereas the main damage to the German fleet was yet to be inflicted.

Jellicoe had to decide in a few moments how to deploy his three squadrons, and his decision was delayed owing to the confusion in the accounts as to the position of the High Seas Fleet. If he formed line of battle on the starboard wing column (*i.e.* towards the west), he would engage the enemy more quickly, but he would expose his 1st Squadron to torpedo attack and concentrated fire during deployment, and before the other divisions were in a position to assist; furthermore, he would allow the High Seas Fleet to overlap. He therefore decided to form line of battle on the port wing column (toward the east). This brought him into contact a little later, but did not expose part of the fleet to concentrated fire at a grave disadvantage.\*

The 1st Battle Squadron, under Vice-Admiral Sir Cecil Burney, came into action during deployment at 6.17 with the enemy's 3rd Battle Squadron. The range was about 11,000 yards, and the chief target was a battleship of the *Kaiser* class. Severe punishment was inflicted on battleships, and on battle cruisers and light cruisers. Half an hour after opening fire the *Marlborough* was struck by a torpedo, and heeled over to starboard; but ten minutes later she reopened fire, and fired with great rapidity and accuracy at a German battleship until she turned out of the line. The *Marlborough* was able to get back to port after the battle. Burney's squadron came under a far heavier fire than any other, except the 5th Battle Squadron. The 4th Battle Squadron had as its divisional leaders Vice-Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee in *Benbow* and Rear-Admiral A. L. Duff in *Superb*. Fire was opened at 6.30 by

\* Some of the critics have made much of this decision to "turn away;" but so far as we can see any other course would have been madness.



the *Iron Duke* on a battleship of the *Koenig* class, at a range of 12,000 yards. She was hit at the second salvo, and continued to be pounded until she turned away. It was just after deployment had been completed that the incident occurred which Sir John Jellicoe says "we particularly admired." A German light cruiser found itself compelled to pass down the British line. All its guns but one had been put out of action; but it gallantly steamed on, firing its only remaining gun in reply to the overwhelming British fire.

Meanwhile Beatty had formed the Battle Cruiser Fleet ahead of the main fleet. By 6.50 Beatty was ahead and east of Jellicoe, and as the Commander-in-Chief began to make his weight felt the British fleet came to steam from south-east to south-west. The 2nd Cruiser Squadron took the van of the battle fleet, connecting it up with Jellicoe. The action between the battle fleets lasted intermittently till 8.20 p.m., and Jellicoe three times changed his course towards the west in the endeavour to close; but the enemy constantly turned away and extended the range under cover \* of destroyer attacks and smoke screens as the effect of the British fire was felt, and the alterations of course had the effect of bringing the British fleet, which had opened action in a position of advantage towards the enemy van, to a position towards the rear of the enemy battle line. This, of course, could only be obtained by steaming in a direction bearing generally to the south-west, which put Jellicoe between Jutland Bank and the German bases and their fleet.

The battle continued as ships showed up, the British battle fleet steaming majestically after the Germans, with Beatty and his cruisers ahead. The British fire was effective. Hits were frequent, some of the German ships being seen to haul out of the line and "at least one to sink." The enemy's return fire was not effective; and the damage caused was insignificant. A German battle cruiser, apparently severely damaged, received an additional battering from the 2nd Battle Squadron, under Sir Thomas Jerram (flagship, *King George V.*). A little after seven the fleet was steaming south; shortly afterwards Beatty had turned south-west by south to come up with the enemy. He had been steaming at 18 knots, to keep in touch with the battle fleet; but now he increased speed to 22 knots, and turned towards the west. One German ship took fire and another dropped astern during this engagement, and the German destroyers covered their capital ships with a heavy smoke screen. After the battle fleet had lost touch with the enemy Beatty was again engaged, and set the leading ship on fire and listing to starboard. *Princess Royal* also set fire to a three-funnelled battleship, and *Indomitable* caused the third ship in the line to heel over, on fire. They vanished into mist, steaming westward at 8.38.

Beatty steamed south-west with his light cruisers spread until 9.24, and as nothing further was seen he came to the conclusion that he was well to the German side of the enemy, and that, being between him and his base, he could locate the enemy at daybreak under most favourable circumstances. He thought the German fleet was north-west of him, as it probably was, and he therefore turned to the course of the main fleet. Jellicoe meanwhile had been held off, as we have seen, by the

\* A second point of criticism of this battle is the second "turn away" of Jellicoe, a little after 7 p.m. It has been suggested that if Jellicoe had turned towards the High Seas Fleet and closed (at all costs, we imagine the argument to be) the German fleet would have been annihilated. This is pure assumption, with little evidence in its favour; for the German vessels had a heavier torpedo fire, and were armed with armour-piercing shells, whereas the British shell exploded on contact. Jellicoe points out in his book that a turn towards the German fleet at this point would have brought the British vessels nearer to the German torpedo boats. It is useless to argue this point without taking these facts into consideration.

attacks of German destroyers. But the attacks, succeeding to some extent in their aim, resulted in a loss of four German destroyers. At 9 P.M. the enemy was completely out of sight, and the threat of torpedo-boat-destroyer tactics during the rapidly approaching darkness made it necessary for Sir John Jellicoe to dispose of the fleet for the night, with a view to its safety from such attacks whilst providing for a renewal of action at daylight. He accordingly manœuvred to remain between the enemy and his bases, placing the British flotillas in a position in which they would afford protection to the fleet from destroyer attack, and at the same time be favourably situated for attacking the enemy's heavy ships.

## II.

So as darkness fell over the North Sea the two greatest and most powerful fleets the world has ever known drew away from each other. Admiral Jellicoe's ships

had been steaming south-west—that is to say, on a course that would have taken them to England. The German fleet therefore lay, when the curtain of night fell, somewhere nearer the shores of Britain. The light cruisers and smaller craft of the British fleet were spread out, covering a large area of the sea, watchfully waiting over these unwelcome hours of darkness between the enemy and his bases. To a landsman how strange this position seems. The fleets had changed places. The British, which normally struck from Britain, was facing its own coasts; the German, similarly disposed as regards its own bases, wished only for sanctuary therein.

How anxiously the night hours passed we cannot say, but it is clear that these were the only period at which anxiety visited the British at all. The great floating forts had to be protected, and the smaller ships, like mediæval squires, interposed their swiftly-moving front between their knights and the enemy. The 4th, 11th, and 12th Destroyer Flotillas took their chance and delivered numerous attacks on the enemy. In the daylight they are too frail to attack

capital ships with impunity, but at night the balance is adjusted in their favour. The 4th Flotilla went into the hazard of darkness gallantly, and the leader, *Tipperary*, was sent to the bottom with its gallant captain, C. J. Wintour. But two torpedoes were seen to take effect, one being from *Spitfire*. The 12th Flotilla,



The Fleets at Night.



coming up with an enemy squadron of six large vessels of the *Kaiser* class, with light cruisers, sank one of the battleships. A second attack resulted in *Manad*, under Commander Champion, getting home a torpedo.

The flotilla was heavily engaged ; and *Onslaught*, which alone received material damage, was left to be brought out of the fight by a sub-lieutenant (H. W. A. Kennins) and a midshipman (R. G. Arnott, R.N.R.). *Castor*, leading the 11th Flotilla, sank an enemy destroyer at point-blank range. These are but a few of the many strange and wonderful episodes of this most wonderful phase of the greatest naval battle of history. In some parts of the line the British vessels were engaged in the darkness, just as the German fleet was being attacked.

Admiral Beatty's ships were farthest south of the British ships, with the 13th Flotilla lying to the rear of the battle fleet. The 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron occupied a similar position with regard to the main fleet. It is the experiences of these two elements of the British fleet that give us some clue to what was happening during these night hours. Clearly they were hours of intense activity for the Germans. They had tasted a little, but quite enough, of Jellicoe's spirit. They had fought skilfully and well, but had known themselves outsteamed, outmanœuvred, and outfought by an older navy with an older tradition, and a far more skilful leader. Scheer, we may be sure, desired no more of such treatment. It was his business to get back to his bases with as little delay as possible.

His course was shaped south-west until he felt himself clear of the British ships, and then he turned eastward and beat up behind the waiting force of Jellicoe. He lost no time in such manœuvres. In them he knew full well lay his only hope of safety. At 10.20 the light cruisers covering Jellicoe's rear were in action with the German light cruisers. *Southampton* and *Dublin* suffered heavily in this encounter, but gave as good as they took. The incident is of most value as showing that the Germans were throwing out feelers. Two hours later *Turbulent*, of the 13th Flotilla, was put out of action by a large vessel that suddenly crossed the rear of the flotilla at high speed. Out of the darkness the searchlights suddenly blazed upon the ships of the flotilla, and a heavy fire fell upon *Petard* and *Turbulent*. Two hours later another destroyer, *Moresby*, saw four ships of the *Deutschland* class and fired a torpedo. The shock of a heavy explosion was felt by her immediately afterwards.

These incidents show us that Scheer was using his opportunities ; and when daylight at length came Jellicoe was fated to see they had been pressed to advantage. The British fleet turned to the north in search of the enemy. The visibility was low, and only carried about three or four miles, and the destroyers did not rejoin till 9 A.M. The elements of the fleet were being collected, and for two hours more Jellicoe remained " in proximity to the battlefield and near the line of approach to the German ports . . . in spite of the disadvantage of long distances from fleet bases and the danger incurred in waters adjacent to enemy coasts from submarines and torpedo craft." The Germans had, no doubt, been helped in ascertaining the British position by the use of Zeppelins, one of which was engaged at 4 A.M., an hour or so after sunrise. They made good their escape, and the British Commander-in-Chief was reluctantly brought to this conclusion a little before noon.

The waters over which the battle had ebbed and flowed were then scoured, and survivors of several destroyers were picked up. There was much wreckage found, and *Sparrowhawk*, which had been in collision and was no longer seaworthy, was

sunk after the crew had been taken off. At 1.15 P.M. Jellicoe turned towards home, and on 2nd June at 9.30 the fleet was recoaled and remunitioned, and ready for further action.

The narrative of the battle would seem to need little commentary. Yet it was a unique encounter in many respects. Mr. Balfour, who had succeeded Mr. Churchill at the Admiralty, acted with little intelligence or imagination. The first news of the battle was published in London on the night of 1st June, and it was merely a bald statement that a battle had been fought and a list of the British losses. The tone was so depressed that the British newspapers jumped to the conclusion that the British fleet had been caught napping. This was all the more inevitable that the Germans sent over the world a glowing report of victory and slight losses. The *Times*, which is one of the most independent and best-conducted journals in the world, said: "We have suffered the heaviest blow at sea we have met with during the war . . . we engaged, perhaps in over-confidence, in a long running fight against ships more numerous, stronger, and more heavily armed." The *Weekly Dispatch* said boldly: "The British navy was beaten." In little different language the same sentiment was voiced by most of the other newspapers, except the *Morning Post* and the *Westminster Gazette*.

Yet what are the facts? If any one was caught, it was Scheer. If Admiral Beatty's course be examined critically and plotted on a chart, it will be evident that he neither went too far south nor rashly engaged overwhelming odds. It must be remembered that he was much superior in striking force to Hipper, and that his only losses were suffered in this engagement—a mere misfortune. The speed of a *fleet* is the speed of its slowest ships, and hence when Hipper had run into Scheer and turned about at the head of the German fleet, Beatty, with only battle cruisers and the fast battleships to manœuvre, had the speed of his enemy. He performed exactly the same service for Jellicoe that Hipper thought he was doing for Scheer. The difference is that Beatty steamed south to a risk he could and did minimise, whereas if Scheer came as near to Jellicoe's deployed ships he took the risk of inevitable disaster.

There was no rashness of tactics. Beatty showed himself to be as skilful as daring. Only the mist and bad light of the North Sea saved the Germans from annihilation. The British fleet, it is true, suffered heavy loss. But every student of the war who had imagined such an encounter had been convinced the losses would be far higher. Of the British fleet *Queen Mary*, *Indefatigable*, *Invincible* (battle cruisers); *Defence*, *Warrior*, and *Black Prince* (armoured cruisers); and *Tipperary*, *Ardent*, *Fortune*, *Shark*, *Sparrowhawk*, *Nestor*, *Nomad*, and *Turbulent* (destroyers) were lost. There is a strange tendency to regard this as the only or the chief loss. Far more serious was the loss of gallant and skilful officers like Rear-Admirals Hood and Arbuthnot, Captains Sowerby, Prowse, Cay, Bonham, Wintour, and Ellis, and a host of other minor officers, like Commander Loftus W. Jones\* (of *Shark*), and men who belonged to that strange old breed of men from whom the greatness of Britain rose. Ships can easily be made good, and in any case

\* Commander Jones's conduct on *Shark* was among the most heroic of the battle. She was early disabled in an attack upon the German light cruisers. *Acasta* stood by to help, but was told to leave in order that a second vessel might not be imperilled. Although wounded the commander continued to direct his crew, and when his leg was torn off fought the one remaining gun, until at last it seemed that the ship might fall into enemy hands. *Shark* was at length torpedoed, and went down with colours flying, and the commander was awarded, posthumously, the V.C.



the British fleet was still of unchallengeable strength; but these gallant and efficient sailors are the product of years of training.

"The enemy fought with the gallantry that was expected of him. We particularly admired the conduct of those on board a disabled German light cruiser which passed down the British line shortly after deployment, under a heavy fire, which was returned by the only gun left in action." The behaviour of the German Admiralty was far different. The first reports sent out painted the encounter as though it were a complete and overwhelming German victory. And this, taken in conjunction with the tone of disaster in the British reports, served for some days to obscure completely the crucial facts of the case. The German fleet went out "on an enterprise directed towards the north." It was driven back, and the British fleet remained in possession of the field of battle. The lesson of the episode was pressed home by the escape of a large number of Allied merchant ships which had before been penned in the Baltic. What sort of victory is that in which the enemy makes a sortie from his besieged fortress and then runs back again, leaving the siege just where it was before?

If the relative losses be examined, it will be even clearer that all pretence of a German victory was as hollow as their boast of invincibility. It must be remembered that if two forces are unequal, the same actual deduction from each is all to the advantage of the larger. We have seen that there was no German strategical victory. Is it possible there was a partial tactical victory? The tactics of an inferior fleet are to inflict constant losses on the opponent until he becomes of sufficiently depleted strength to justify a complete challenge. Unless the absolute loss inflicted upon the opponent is so much higher—that is to say, relatively superior—the inferior fleet is drawing no nearer the day when it may challenge the superior; it may actually be becoming far less able to meet its opponent.

The German losses must then be examined. The first official German report admitted the loss of the *Pommern*, the *Wiesbaden*, the *Frauenlob*, and "some destroyers." If this were a complete account of the German losses, it is clear they had won a tactical victory. But a British *communiqué* put the German losses as two battleships, two *Dreadnought* cruisers, the light cruisers *Wiesbaden*, *Elbing*, *Frauenlob*, a light cruiser of the *Rostock* type, at least nine destroyers, and a submarine. There is a vast difference between the two lists, and there is one arresting point about the German list: it includes in the three large ships the names of two (*Pommern* and *Frauenlob*) that had been announced sunk long before by the Allies. To say the least of it, this is a most amazing coincidence.

But the course of the fortnight after the battle threw some light on the German methods. Some survivors were landed from the *Elbing*, and her name was at once added to the German list. Presumably the same is true of the *Rostock*, for that name also was added later. It will be noticed that the British *communiqué* was being gradually admitted. Then eight days later the loss of the battle cruiser *Lützow* was announced. It had sunk, so the German Admiralty stated, on going into port, and its loss had been concealed "for military reasons." This damning admission gives the key to the situation. The Germans, throughout the war, admitted only the losses they could not conceal. Their casualty lists were carefully framed to look as probable as possible without telling the truth. And it must be realised that the only valid criterion from a strictly military point of view is the success of the expedient. If the German home population and neutrals

could be convinced that the Germans were suffering less than the Allies, there would be a conservation of home *moral* and a check upon wavering neutrals. Indeed, the immediate sequence of events in Greece, almost unconcealed official hostility and insulting behaviour to the Entente representatives, amply proved this point. If they had not been speedily disabused, the position of the Allies at Salonika would have been impossible.

We are left then to frame a list of the German losses on more trustworthy evidence. In Sir John Jellicoe's dispatch is enclosed a "List of Enemy Vessels put out of Action." We may give this with the first German admissions.

<i>British Admiral's Report.</i>	<i>German Admissions.</i>
2 Battleships, <i>Dreadnought</i> type } seen to	<i>Pommern</i> admitted, but from other
1 Battleship, <i>Deutschland</i> type } sink.	evidence it seems to have been
	a <i>Dreadnought</i> battleship.
1 Battle cruiser.	<i>Lützow</i> (sunk).
1 <i>Dreadnought</i> battleship	seen to be so severely
1 Battle cruiser	
	damaged as to render it
	extremely doubtful if they
	could reach port.
5 Light cruisers (seen to sink; one of them had the appearance of being a larger type, and might have been a battleship).	Four light cruisers.
6 Destroyers (seen to sink).	"Some."
3 Destroyers (seen to be so severely damaged as to render it extremely doubtful if they could reach port).	
1 Submarine (sunk).	

Thus, the British navy saw sunk 3 great battleships, 1 battle cruiser, 5 light cruisers, 6 destroyers, and 1 submarine. This would have been almost, if not quite, as great an *absolute* loss, and certainly a far heavier *relative* loss. If we take into account the caution of the British Admiral and his undisguised skill and honesty, we have to add the probability of the additional loss of 1 *Dreadnought* battleship, 1 battle cruiser, and 3 destroyers. If these can be admitted, they make the British victory so great that, as some one caustically remarked, "two more similar German victories would finish the German fleet." This is to ignore the losses in men and the damage inflicted on numerous other ships. These cannot be ignored, and it is clear that Jellicoe had reason to say he had inflicted heavy loss on the enemy. To sum up, the British fleet inflicted a strategic, tactical, and moral defeat on the German High Seas Fleet, and was only prevented from annihilating it by adverse conditions. The Germans certainly bore themselves manfully and skilfully; but the best that can be said of them apart from this is that they looked in the face of death and escaped. There is some reason for self-gratulation over that. As to the moral elation of the British sailors no one can be in doubt. They came home with the conviction of victory, but with a disappointment that it was not quite complete. To their surprise, their elation met with a cold douche from the British press. Yet no one could fail to be struck with the unanimity of the conviction that they had crushingly defeated the Germans; this for a service that is cold, reserved, and cautious by habit means much.

The great battle showed up many strange points. The submarines proved useless, even when attempting to deal with the damaged *Marlborough*. The destroyers performed their rôle magnificently. The gunnery had proved to be far less deadly



than was expected. Aeroplanes were used for the first time, and proved their value. And Zeppelins were successfully used as scouts. But beyond all these lessons of the fight, one cannot fail to be struck with the extraordinary skill of the commanders, Jellicoe and Scheer. Even the latter had to control and direct against a terribly great enemy a host of ships of all sizes. Sir John Jellicoe's direction left nothing to be desired. He brought his ships into action under fire as though at manœuvres. The seven divisions deployed with the perfection that seems generally to be reserved to theoretical treatises.

And in the end the Fleet remained supreme. The blockade continued, and the truth, making its way little by little, did probably more damage to Germany than a candid admission at the beginning would have done. At the end of the war it was admitted by the Germans that after the Battle of Jutland a second fleet action was considered out of the question.

## VII. RUSSIA VINDICATES HERSELF.

IN mid-May the Austrians began their offensive in the Trentino. It went forward like a battering-ram. There was a heavy concentration of guns and a vast accumulation of troops of first quality. General Cadorna held the main and critical avenues of advance from Trent; but day after day saw the sagging of the line towards the Venetian plain, and complaints were heard in the Italian press against the Allies' supineness. Before this Italy had not been whole-hearted in the struggle; but in the searching fires of those days of invasion a new national unity was forged.

It was when the Austrians were thoroughly embarked on their adventure that the Russian Staff, on the earnest appeal of the Italians, determined to anticipate the moment for the beginning of their offensive in order to bring relief to Italy. The Russians had to abandon their own plan, which had contemplated a main attack on the Vilna sector, with only subsidiary operations on the Northern and Southern fronts. And when Brussiloff struck towards Lutsk the main concentration of men and guns had already been made on Evert's front, in preparation for an attack which was to synchronise with the opening of the Somme battle in the early days of July.

There can be no doubt that they knew that troops and guns were being withdrawn from their front, and it is possible they could have averted the attack upon Italy entirely. But the season would have been bad for any great movement, and every week's delay saw more and more munitions filtering into their depôts. To the gain from the better season and the larger accumulation of munitions must be added the greater advantage from the advanced state of training of the recruits. These reasons for delay were in reality subordinate to the main deduction of the Russian Staff, that, with Austria once embarked upon the Trentino campaign, with her heavy guns and numerous troops laboriously drawn off into a sector of the front that was comparatively remote, they had from a fortnight's to a month's chance to seek conclusions with a line thinned to the uttermost, and depleted of all but local reserves.

The month of June opened for the Allies with every appearance of disaster. The Austrians were pouring into Italy. Cadorna had not been able to bring the advance to a halt. Verdun seemed to be near the end. And then suddenly it became known that the Russians were being heavily attacked north-east and south of Krevo. This small village lies at the centre of the base of a triangle whose apex is the

important junction Molodechna, the capture of which would have had a serious effect upon the Russian line north of the Pripet Marshes. For some three days the violent assault continued ; but before it had achieved any success, before it had even spent itself, a fierce Russian bombardment broke out over the whole extent of the line from the Kovel-Sarny railway to the Rumanian border. And in the next fortnight the meaning of the abortive attack about Krevo became clear.

The truth is, as we have pointed out, no great concentration of guns or troops can be made without the enemy coming to know of it. The old expedient in the war of movements of a cavalry screen behind which critical readjustments were taking place, might seem to have found a more complete and sufficient substitute in the entrenched lines lying from coast to frontier. But aerial reconnaissance had made surprise more and more difficult to achieve, and careful airmen could scent out all that was afoot behind the hostile lines. The assault on Krevo was the recognition in military procedure of the preparations of Evert. It was an attempt to cause a diversion, fetter the advance at the outset by tempting the Russians to attack before their concentration was complete.

Falkenhayn's star set with the Russian advance. Hindenburg's line had been thinned more and more to provide further troops for the Crown Prince at Verdun, and when June opened the whole eastern line was weakened to a perilous degree. It was commanded from the Baltic to the Pripet by Hindenburg, and from thence to the Rumanian frontier by the Austrian Archduke Frederick. The division between the two commands was a sop to the Austrian pride which was their most dangerous quality. Just before Brussiloff broke the Austrian lines, the High Commands were boasting, in public and in private, that their position was unshakable.

Indeed, when the lines had been broken and they could be examined, it was seen how much the Austrians had trusted to them. They had, of course, much reason. The defences were as strong and well engineered as any on any front. The trenches were well made, the dug-outs masterpieces of art. The barbed-wire defences were in places 300 yards deep, and the wire as thick as a finger. Trenches and communication trenches were so elaborate that they formed in the end a veritable trap for their defenders, who could not escape from them with sufficient speed in order to avoid capture by the Russian cavalry. They stretched in systems some distance apart for miles.

They were maintained by machine guns in abundance. There were enormous supplies of ammunition ; and though the bulk of the heavy guns had been removed to the Trentino, there were many left, and considerable numbers of field guns. The quarters behind the lines were like garden cities, laid out with care and considerable artistry. There were vast factories for army supplies. Even a sausage factory was found. Huge granaries and tilled fields, with carefully laid out plots for vegetables, were all found near the fighting line—a conspicuous witness to the Austrian confidence in their boasts. Everything bespoke the state of permanency which they presumed to have been won by their victories of the preceding summer and autumn.

Yet every Russian attack since that time, as General Brussiloff informed Mr. Stanley Washburn, the *Times* special correspondent, had been a sort of research into the best means of dealing with the problems of modern warfare. It was a testing and trying of the theories advanced by the theorists ; and if up to the beginning of June the attacks had proved unsuccessful, let us not forget that the campaign of Verdun, after the first rush had been brought to a halt, was conducted upon lines



deduced to be the sound tactics emerging from the Allied failure in Champagne in September 1915. Yet Verdun was a German failure ; indeed it was probably *the* failure. It was admitted to have been a defeat in September ; but that it was a decisive defeat was only seen later. The Russians learned their lesson ; and the more we examine into the detail of their achievements in June 1916, the more we must be convinced that it owed a great deal to leadership and much to the superb quality of the men.

Glance, for instance, at this section of the line in Volhynia. The trenches were cunningly contrived through a thick forest of high leafy trees. How could these be seen and marked down ? Airmen could not get near them. In the foreground and all about were these same straight trunks. Such an obstacle could only have been rushed or turned. The wire entanglements were beaten to dust ; but without the superb heroism of the Russian troops the line could not have been carried. This is only one typical example of the extraordinary obstacles which the Russian troops crossed in their impetuous onset.

Let us gather some idea of the opposing forces which provided this dramatic episode. The barrier of the Pripet Marshes was the rough division between the German and Austrian commands, though one Austrian army corps remained to the north, and two German generals with several German units were left to the south. In June these amounted to about three divisions, one being in the command of the Bavarian general Count Bothmer, and the other two were part of the Prussian Linsingen's Volhynian Army. Linsingen himself had no definite position until the Russian blow had beaten the Austrian armies so completely that it was clear a capable and experienced general was required to save the troops from absolute disaster.

South of the Pripet to the uneasy village of Tchartorysk, which commanding a crossing on the Styr came to have a bloody history of assault, fire, and ruin, General Puhallo was in command of the 3rd Austrian Army. The Volhynian fortress triangle was held by the 4th Austrian Army of the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand. Two of the fortresses, Lutsk and Dubno, were in his hands ; Rovno had never been conquered, and Brussiloff had only surrendered Dubno after it had twice changed hands. These two armies, with at least two German divisions in them, stood on Russian territory, with its more meagre communications and its freer area of movement. The northern borders of their holding were different territory in another way. The ground was marshy, and more difficult for both sides to fortify and hold. But it had been organised with profound insight and ingenuity. Roads had been laid down formed by huge balks of timber, and elaborate breastworks were built.

South of the purely Volhynian sector lay the 2nd Austrian Army of General Boehm-Ermolli—from Dubno to the Tarnopol-Krasne-Lemberg railway line, a sector lying chiefly in Russian territory. Its southern flank dipped into Eastern Galicia, and its line of retreat would bring it more and more into that province. From the right flank of Boehm-Ermolli to the neighbourhood of Buczacz, Count Bothmer's army faced the Russians ; and to the south of him the army of Pflanzer-Baltin carried the defensive to the confines of Rumania. In all, there were in these five armies some forty to forty-two divisions of infantry, and perhaps eleven of cavalry.

Of little greater strength in infantry were the Russian armies which took the offensive over this southern sector of the line. They had a greater force of cavalry at their disposal ; but it cannot be said that there was any striking disparity in the

total numbers. The Russians had admittedly that inflation of numbers which comes from superior mobility ; but it was available where military students would have said it was least valuable—against entrenched lines. That it was a *real* effective mobility must be attributed to the daring and boldness with which the cavalry was used by that cavalryman of genius, Brussiloff. The experiment of using cavalry in Champagne had proved disastrous ; and almost at this moment the *Times* military correspondent was writing derisively that “there must be no sending cavalry through the gap G.” The Russians wrote a rubric on this statement : “Make sure, first, that the gap is a gap.” The point which seemed obvious was further qualified by the provision that the gap must offer an opening upon some object of first-rate military importance, such that a vigorous threat would be another inducement to the torn lines to fall back for fear of wholesale envelopment. As we shall see, it was done ; and the fact is better than much theory.

General Brussiloff had made his mark before he opened this great offensive movement. A spare, graceful man of middle height, he was sixty-three years of age, but looked considerably younger. He was a handsome and vigorous man, and not only a famous cavalry leader but a great horseman. He had succeeded the great Ivanoff, who in April had been called to Imperial Headquarters as adviser to the Tsar, in command of the armies south of the Pripet. Brussiloff had led the first advance through Galicia with Ruzsky, and had particularly distinguished himself in withdrawing the 8th Russian Army over the Carpathians and back into Russia when Dimitrieff's Army had been broken by Mackensen.

At the beginning of the offensive, Brussiloff had under his control four Russian armies, and two of them made the names of their commanders instantly famous throughout the world. All of them—Kaledin, Lechitsky, Sakharoff, and Tcherbatcheff—before the campaign was ended, had become familiar to ordinary newspaper readers. The 8th Army was the northernmost of Brussiloff's command, and on relinquishing its direction, he had entrusted it to General Kaledin, a shortish, thick-set, bearded cavalryman who had formerly been in charge of a cavalry division in this army. He had been soon transferred to the charge of an army corps, and his selection to direct the 8th Army was as completely approved by the immediate evidence of facts as any one could desire. Kaledin's command comprised almost the whole of the Volhynian front, and his headquarters were at Rovno.

General Lechitsky was the other of Brussiloff's commanders who achieved immediate fame in the offensive. The son of a Greek Orthodox priest, he had risen from the lowest rungs of the ladder. He had entered the army as a volunteer, and found his way to high command through sterling merit. He, like Kaledin, entered the war as a divisional commander ; and his rise to be commander of an army had not been long achieved before he astounded the world by throwing his troops fifty miles forward in the first month of the offensive. His 9th Army held the line from the Dniester to the Bukovina frontier.

Between the Dniester and Volhynia lay the 11th Army, under General Sakharoff, and the 7th Army of Tcherbatcheff. Sakharoff held the front between the borders of Volhynia and the Tarnopol railway, while Tcherbatcheff's command crossed Eastern Galicia. These four armies were reputed by the Germans to be about the same in infantry strength as the Austro-Hungarian armies over against them ; but they were supposed to have about three divisions more cavalry. This would give some 12,000 horse ; not, indeed, a very great matter in a battle of over a million men.



Such the forces that came to grips at the beginning of the June offensive. They were not vastly disproportionate numerically or even in guns. The Russians, with every effort made by the Allies to help them, and with the valuable assistance of the Japanese, were unable to secure that preponderance in guns which military experts thought necessary at the time. The enemy was suffering badly from over-conceit, and the Russians were able to put into the field not only a better quality of troops but a number of brilliant generals. The Austrians had made their defences as mechanically perfect as possible, and had come to rely upon them as impregnable. The Russians, refusing to admit, as who but the superficial would, that the lines could not be stormed, at the same time determined that the solution of the problem was not a mechanical one. Military students on the West juggled with the words "huge artillery preponderance." As if any amount of artillery can do more than smash. It is infantry that establishes a line. The Russian High Command did not even, like the Franco-British offensive in the West, attempt to beat the trench defences to dust.

Brussiloff set himself to solve a simple problem. The very rigidity of the wire entanglements made them brittle, and the Russian gunners marked down certain spaces at intervals over the front of 250 miles or so in order to cut swathes through them. The Allied offensive in September 1915 was preceded by nearly six weeks of almost continuous bombardment. The longest Russian shelling was about thirty hours, and at places it ranged from three to twelve hours. There was some shelling on 2nd June. Then the following day it began to work up in intensity, and on the 4th the infantry went forward. The procedure was something after this fashion.

The shelling had cut holes in the Austrian entanglements at various points over the whole front. Then, at the moment the artillery range lifted, the infantry went forward through these gaps and entered the Austrian trenches. The Russian shrapnel was covering the Austrian rear, and the defenders were, therefore, compelled to fight it out in the trenches with the bayonet or to surrender. They were enfiladed at various points, and were quite unequal to a tussle with the splendid Russian soldiery when the bayonet was the weapon used. The Russian soldiers, with the long murderous blade in their hands, proved irresistible. The struggle was at first fierce; but the onset was so impetuous that even on the first day 13,000 prisoners fell into the hands of Brussiloff's generals.

As the attack was being directed over the whole front at the same hour, there could be no buttressing of one sector at the expense of another. Each had to look to itself. On the second and third days of the offensive the number of prisoners was as great as on the first, and there were 77 guns, 134 machine guns, and vast quantities of material taken. Whole batteries intact fell into the Russian hands; searchlights, ammunition dumps, telephones, kitchens, and so on were captured. This is evidence of the completeness with which the defensive was broken down, and it is almost unnecessary to add that in these three days the Russians had pressed twenty miles forward into the Austrian lines.

Such a stroke revolutionized the whole atmosphere of the war. All sorts of possibilities emerged into the region of the practicable, and there can be no doubt that the German command was able even at this moment to visualise certain developments that it had before resolutely refused to admit as possible. The success was not equally great over the whole front. Between the Dniester and the Pruth the Austrian line was torn open completely, and the same was true of the line in the region about



Ground gained in first month of Russian Offensive.

Lutsk. There was also a gap at Buczacz. But from Visniowtchik, about twelve miles to the north of Buczacz, on the Strypa to Zalotse, just within the Galician borders, Bothmer's Army stood firm. His northern neighbour, Boehm-Ermolli, had also suffered little, and Puhallo was not seriously affected north of Kolki. But the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand and Pflanzer Baitin had lost very heavily indeed. Add to the number of prisoners the list of dead and wounded, and we have some comprehension of the losses the Austro-Hungarians must have suffered during these days.

It was in the area of Lechitsky's advance that the initial success was most useful. An army penetrating into the position of an army risks what it threatens. It aims at turning back the broken parts of the line by enfilading them; but it is in the position to be enfiladed directly it passes through the broken line. Boldness, discipline, and decision decide who is to give way—whether the breached line shall heal itself by destroying the rash force that had broken through, or whether the hole in the line will be widened more and more till the whole of the line will be compelled to fall back to escape envelopment. Lechitsky, in breaching the line *at the end*, was practically secured from this threat. One of his flanks would go forward resting upon neutral



(Rumanian) territory. Only the right flank need fear enfilade fire, and this threat was the more remote in proportion to the pressure he was able to exert upon his enemy's open flank. Moreover, the Dniester protected this flank a little and narrowed his objective to securing certain crossings.

The struggle would be worth following in minutest detail, if that were possible. Even minor encounters that will never find their way into any enduring record were full of thrilling incident. In Volhynia the line on 1st June ran from about Olyka, just below the Kovel-Rovno railway, a little east of Dubno, to about the same distance east of Kremenez. The best part of this sector as regards facilities for rapid advance was that about Olyka, between the Putilovka and Ikva streams. There were two useful highroads in this region, centring in Lutzk. One was the Rovno-Lutzk road, the other the Dubno road. The Rovno road runs almost due west; the Dubno road north-west. These roads were the main avenues of advance, and the distance across which the Russian front swept was between fifteen and twenty miles.

**Capture of Lutzk.**—The 2nd Division (one of the few on this front with a considerable number of Slav soldiers in it), with the 10th Hungarian Division, held this section of the front; but so completely were the gaps made that the Russian cavalry appearing in the rear was the first intimation the defenders had of the disaster that had befallen them, and large numbers of the two divisions were taken prisoner on 4th June, when the troops were celebrating the birthday of the Austrian Commander-in-Chief.

Another division (the 13th) was brought up to stem the tide; but it, like the other troops, was swept aside, and the bulk of its effectives were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. The advance was irresistible, carried on as much by the elation of spirit of the Russian soldier as anything. As they swung along, battalion after battalion of splendid bronzed men shouting out their inspiring marching songs, or stepping vigorously at the end of a march to the playing of the bands, they seemed to possess in them the force that would press any blow home. On this sector of the front the immediate objective was the Russian fortress Lutzk, which stands aloft on a hill, naturally moated by a bend of the river. Lutzk was the centre of the Austrian defensive in the Volhynia area. It had been protected by lines and redoubts of immense strength. Four times it had changed hands, but the Austrians had meant to hold it now permanently. Its old castle, perched aloft on the hilltop, had seen many vicissitudes during the war, but none so dramatic as that of those three first days of the Russian offensive. The town seemed to become simply a passage. Streams of transports flowing through had to draw aside to permit the passage of the reinforcements that were being hurried up. At times the old streets became blocked. Fresh troops, weary and wounded men, ammunition columns, transport wagons, became inextricably mixed. Only the flushed face of the victor was absent, and in spite of all these warnings that was the one thing which seemed totally unexpected.

The Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, after the anxious celebrations of his relative's birthday, had been hard at work trying to evolve the traditional Hapsburg genius; trying, as it seemed from the Staff maps, to stop an inundation of the ocean by a trick or two. He remained cool enough; but it was not the coolness of self-possession, rather the coolness of lack of competence. Part of this, no doubt, was due to the extraordinary boldness of the Russian command. When the line about Olyka

was broken, the troops were sent forward at once with the greatest dispatch. The resulting situation was unique. There were Cossacks several miles into country held by the Austrians before the defending lines had been actually carried. They rode straight ahead. Thus, while the second or third Austrian lines were still maintained, the Russians were past them, and causing tremendous disorganisation behind.

The advance was not pushed without losses, but its results were beyond all expectations. Troops were pressing forward on Lutsk as fast as they could, over ground broken up by defensive systems, while behind them the enemy still attempted to put up a resistance against the assaulting columns. Gunners coolly sighting their batteries were suddenly confronted by Russian cavalry, and took to their heels in wild disorder, or were cut down or taken prisoner. The sum total of these disconcerting encounters was confusion. Retreat was appreciated as a necessity; but how far it must go and where the resistance must be made was not grasped. The full value of surprise was gained, whereas all the conditions seemed to point to the elimination of that factor at least.

On 6th June the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, with his Staff, was still in Lutsk, while the Russians were approaching the town rapidly. As the afternoon wore on towards evening, and the Staff reported the presence of Russians in force at so many places near at hand, the army commander at length made up his mind to go. All the Staff apparatus—the maps, order books, and the rest—were hurriedly packed up. The Archduke mounted his car and drove west, and the Staff at length left the town hardly half an hour before the first Russian troops entered it, at 8.25 P.M. Guns in and around the town were found with the shells in and the breeches closed. There were vast military stores, and the hospitals were full of the Austrian wounded.

The capture of Lutsk on the third day of the offensive was a surprising and unique testimony to the real peril to Germany in the Russian Staff. The advanced defences of the town had been abandoned intact. Krupy, the village on the Lutsk-Dubno road upon which the Austrians had relied for at least a check, had been carried with hardly any difficulty. And Lutsk opened up the way to Kovel and Vladimir Volynsk, and even gave a flank pressure for the advance upon Lemberg. But the Austrian problem was more complex than the stopping of the Russian offensive from Lutsk; the troops had stormed the enemy defences at numerous other points in the line, and were pressing forward. Two days after the capture of Lutsk the Russians had pushed out their line to the Styr and the Ikva, and were even across the rivers. A glance at the map will show how much this means. The two streams make a vast semicircle on the Russian winter front from about Kolki to Dubno, and the extent of the advance represents over a third and not quite a half of the distance to Vladimir Volynsk.

On this day, the 8th of June, the German Staff began to exert itself. The peril of the continuance of the advance was recognised, and extraordinary expedients were adopted to stem it. German reinforcements began to be hurried southwards. They were drawn at first from the nearest point, the marsh sector, and then later from the extreme north. The Prussian von Linsingen took command of the Volhynian armies, and the Germans assumed the actual control of the sector by sending south Ludendorff. But the change was not formally announced until Ludendorff had brought order and hope into the sector; and when the resistance had been thoroughly reorganised, Hindenburg followed his henchman, to steal as before the praise of its achievement.



But by this time the fighting was developing disastrously for the Austro-Germans in that quarter. The reason for the taking over of the Volhynian sector was that it was the vital connecting link between the Austrian and German commands. If the breach were not repaired, not only would the Austrian armies be swept south into Galicia, under threat of wholesale envelopment, but the Germans would have an exposed line of communication, and would themselves be compelled to retire.

The fighting in Galicia was more difficult than in Volhynia. The conformation of Eastern Galicia is such that the country is cut from north to south by numerous valleys, threaded by streams. At times the streams lay but a mile or two apart. About Buczacz the winter front ran along a stream, a mile or a little more east of the Strypa and parallel with it. The day after Lutzk was entered General Tcherbatcheff's troops had forced this line and reached the Strypa. A day later they entered Buczacz. But to the north the obdurate sector about Tarnopol was held by Bothmer's troops, who gave little ground. The Russians, however, went forward past Buczacz, and on the same day overflowed for several miles over the Strypa. This signal success, which resulted in numerous captures, then came to a halt.

**Invasion of Bukovina.**—Farther south Lechitsky was already earning laurels from the Austrian strategist, Pflanzer-Baltin. His success was the more remarkable that the front upon which he was operating was difficult. When the offensive opened, the Austrian line had in front of it the broad water-course of the Dniester. It curved south in an oddly insecure-looking loop about the important bridgehead of Zaleszczvki, then drew a chord across the hill-filled loop of the river, to follow it later fairly closely until it touched the Bessarabian frontier, which frontier it lined southwards to the Pruth. To cross the Dniester in any sufficient force the bridgehead of Zaleszczvki would have to be secured. Farther east, at Utsie Biskupie, Lechitsky had some leverage by holding the higher ground north of the Dniester. But the line of advance was complicated by the fact that below the Pruth Rumania begins, and the Russians could not march over there. The strange little corner, indeed, led to some curious international complications; for in the heat of the fighting each side crossed the neutral frontier, a village or two was burned, and apologies and indemnities were necessary.

In the smaller loop of the river, about Utsie Biskupie, were a couple of hills that fell into the flat country about Okna to Dobronovtse. Okna lay on the road from Utsie Biskupie, and Dobronovtse was just west of the Russian line. To the south lay the line of the Berdo Horodysche ridge, which the Russians had already found to be almost impregnable from the east. That they had no intention of repeating the errors of the preceding winter is shown by the fact that a frontal attack upon Berdo Horodysche was eliminated from their plans. Their scheme now included the turning of the obstacle by the capture of the ground commanding its rear.

After some thirty hours' artillery preparation, the Russian infantry advanced across the river at Okna, and the enemy fell back a few miles to hills commanding the lower position they had abandoned. But when the assault was delivered at Dobronovtse, it became clear to Pflanzer-Baltin that retreat here was impossible without yielding possibly the whole of the bulk of Bukovina. A terrible pitched battle developed in the tiny salient of the Austrian line, and some of the best Hungarian blood was shed in defence of this small gateway into their country. Austria won a disreputable fame in the war as being an aristocracy without a nobility, using her men like cannon fodder, but caring for her officers as though they were a

different species. Of Hungary it can only be said she knew the meaning of *noblesse oblige*, and her nobles justified their blood by their deeds.

The defence of this key to the Bukovina was not only heroic; it was skilful, with all the hideous skill that modern war has discovered. The Russians had to make their way against an enfilade fire from the south, against a curtain fire that drew a deadly zone before them, against huge mine explosions that cast up whole fields, engulfing in the debris all that stood therein. It was almost a week before the position was won; but it gave not only the position into the hands of the invaders, but also 18,000 soldiers and a number of guns. With the Russians in its rear, the Berdo Horodysche was an obstacle no longer; and Lechitsky had won this significant victory: a footing between the rivers Dniester and Pruth, which must take the Dniester line in rear, as it had the hill barrier along the Bessarabian frontier.

Indeed, on the 12th, the Dniester line had been forced to retire from Horodenka to the bridgehead of Zaleszczyki. The Buczacz sector had a moving enemy on its right flank, and the numerous roads centring on Czernovitz, the capital of Bukovina, lay open. A glance at the map will show how great was this victory and its vast potentialities of exploitation. The Austrians had no further natural barrier to interpose between themselves and the advancing troops until the Carpathians were reached. With the greatest intrepidity Cossack patrols were found riding everywhere. The heavy guns barked, the field artillery was rushed up under fire, and nothing could stay the determination of the Russian infantry. Czernovitz came under the Russian guns on 11th June, a week after the advance began. Sniatyn fell two days later, and it was clear to eager observers everywhere that the only uncertainty was whether the Austrians could check the onslaught north of the Carpathians.

How strikingly these splendid successes of the Russians transformed the outlook on the war only those who had waited so long under the seemingly inevitable course of German victory can really appreciate. Military students might say, as they did, that the Marne was the death-blow to German hopes of victory. But it was but an *inference*; and its cogency seemed to ebb away in the light of the reconquest of Galicia, the capture of Warsaw, the campaign in the Balkans, and the Trentino invasion. This was the first touch of positive fact which enforced the inference, and the civilian population of the Allies and friendly disposed neutrals, who took the obvious rather than the implied for their mentor, began to realise how much their former hopes had been based on faith.

Meanwhile Kaledin's troops had been pressing onward against increasing resistance in the salient they had made in the Austrian positions about Lutsk. As in the Trentino, railways were of the first importance, and the enemy resistance centred in the points where the Rovno-Kovel railway and the Rovno-Brody line crossed the rivers Styr and Ikva respectively. Rositch, the junction at the former crossing, was an advanced base. Vast stores had been concentrated there, and skilfully laid light railways to Kolki and Lutsk centred in it. To capture it was to steal the strength of the former and release the right flank of the Lutsk force. Advancing up the Rovno line, the Russians ("raw troops," we are told) took it on the morning of the 9th, despite the German reinforcements and the heavy artillery fire. On the same day the third of the Volhynian fortresses, Dubno, after five days' violent assault, was captured, with the town in ruins. Sakharoff's troops here, admirably



handled, carried the stream Ikva at Mlynoff, and took the village of Deniedovka, nearly ten miles south-west.

These successes seem to be merely, as they were essentially, the establishing of the situation at Lutzk. The town could not be securely held while such places as Dubno, Mlynoff, and Rositch were in the hands of the enemy. It would always be open to attack from the flanks. The decision to press on before they were captured must be regarded as a clear evidence of the coolness and enlightenment of the Russian leading. That it was sound as a military policy cannot be in doubt. The farther the nose of the salient was pushed past Lutzk, the larger the line the Austrians were condemned to defend, and the more critical their losses became. An army which is only competent to defend ten miles cannot be expected to defend twenty. The advance west of Lutzk, therefore, in effect weakened the resistance about Dubno and Rositch. It acted as a sort of indirect suction, and while it lay under threat from these points, it was maturing a threat against them which in the end would become irresistible.

Yet it seemed almost an act of faith. The gap at Lutzk was complete, and it was the Russian aim to keep it so. Cossack patrols were sent far ahead into the enemy country. Well strung out, they could search thoroughly all the land they traversed; and they formed an admirable screen to the movements of the Russian main body at the same time that they were acting as its eyes. A week after the offensive had begun Kaledin's Lutzk detachment was near Torchin, about eighteen miles west of Lutzk on the Vladimir Volynsk road. By this time over 100,000 prisoners had been taken, including several generals and numerous officers. There were vast quantities of material in hand, including much rolling stock, several filled granaries, numbers of guns, including several complete batteries, huge stores of ammunition, great numbers of rifles, with small-arms ammunition and hundreds of machine guns.

The offensive had now settled down to some extent on definite lines. Moltke used to say that a campaign could not be planned after the first battle, and the Russian summer offensive was no exception. The methods, the leading, the troops remained; but other "first" battles were now being planned. While the struggle went on without cessation, its chances now took on a certain colour. The possible sweeping of the whole line out of existence, the hope of the really bloodthirsty part of the community—the civilians—had passed from the immediate foreground of possibility. The Austrian line was firm in the centre, but yawning holes had been driven in the north and south flanks. The full and prompt development of these successes was the immediate concern of the Russian Staff.

The second week of the offensive marked the gathering of the forces of resistance and the Austro-German counter-offensive. On 12th June the Lutzk troops had reached Torchin, and on the following day the Russians came up against a heavy enemy force, and the fighting became most violent. While the salient was pressed out to the south and developed to the north, this was its most westerly point on the Vladimir Volynsk road. On the 16th the battle was still joined about Zaturisky; but Kaledin and Sakharoff, with that versatile use of alternatives that so strikingly marked the future course of the offensive, were pushing out the salient in other directions, until it made a huge irregular bulge, forty-five miles from Olyka at its nearest point. Below Zaturisky it was outlined by Lokatchy (hardly ten miles from the Kovel-Rawa-Ruska line), Svininkhy Gorokhoff, and the

northern frontiers of East Galicia, to Kozin on the Dubno-Brody line. North from Zatursky it ran through Kiesilen along the Stokhod to Svidniki (the nearest point to Kovel), and then curved back to Kolki (on the Styr), which had been captured on the day that the fighting developed at Zatursky.

**Linsingen's Counter-attack.**—The obvious point for a serious counter-attack would be somewhere about the Stokhod, where a breach in the Russian line would have let the enemy in on the rear of troops which lay to the south, but farther west. The chances of success for such a blow would be bettered by every mile the Russians advanced westward, as long as they could not carry the line directly forward towards Kovel. It was, accordingly, imperative for Kaledin to look to the northern flank of his command. All the troops that Germany could spare, even some from Verdun, were being hurriedly accumulated for the stroke which should save Kovel, and with it the enemy line as a whole.

Kaledin and Sakharoff decided to defend the southern flank of the salient by pushing it farther south. The enemy had organised their resistance along the stream Plashchevka, which runs parallel to the Galician frontier (a few miles to the south) from Kozin to the north-west. The obstacle was conquered on 15th June by the dauntless regiment of Colonel Tataroff, who, after a violent struggle, went into the deep water, and holding their rifles above their heads, forded it with the water up to their necks. A company was engulfed, but the enemy was put to flight, leaving 70 officers and 5,000 men prisoners. Such spirit could not be denied, and the following day the Russians had reached Radzivilov, on the Dubno-Lemberg railway. Farther south they pushed the line to the Galician frontier at Alexinetz.

It was on this day the counter-attack, which had already been foreseen, opened. It was directed from Gadamichi, a few miles west of Kolki, on the Styr. It is just about here that the Styr and the Stokhod make a corridor of from six to eight miles width, and the Russian line, which stretched from Kolki across the space between the two rivers, became the scene of desperate fighting. With splendid courage Colonel Kisling's Siberians, not content with throwing back the enemy, took the offensive, crossed the Stokhod near Svidniki, and captured a whole German battalion. The Hussars of White Russia and Colonel Smirnoff's Cossack regiment repulsed the counter-attacks of the Germans at Svidniki, and for the moment a sort of equilibrium between the forces seemed to have been achieved. The Russians were within twenty-five miles of Kovel, but were unable to advance against it directly. Still Kaledin's army alone had taken the equivalent of almost two complete army corps of prisoners.

The German recoil now began to exercise a real pressure. The attack on Gadamichi had been a sort of preliminary feeler. But the counter-offensive was directed with skill and maintained with the utmost violence. The Russian armies were not far from Brody, and looking towards Lemberg, and they were firmly established opposite Kovel. Four German divisions were transferred from the Western front, two of them, according to a document taken from a prisoner, from Verdun to Kovel in six days. Up to the end of June this was the total reinforcement from the Western front, though later on nine divisions were transferred.

Day by day the Germans had accumulated more and more men in this area. All they could reasonably spare were sent post-haste to the district about Kovel. Guns were laboriously railed thither, and a vast and mighty phalanx grew up behind the German lines to stem the tide of the advance and perhaps restore the old lines. We



can no more assume that the Germans achieved their end than we can take any other achievement as all that had been proposed. There is evidence that the Austrians expected some far-reaching counterstroke.

The whole of the Lutzk salient, the huge unwieldy bulge which the Russians had made in the enemy lines, was subjected to intense pressure beginning on 16th June. The German guns belched forth an apparently continuous stream of shells. Their noise could be heard miles back from the front until almost the end of the month. The counter-offensive, though one in conception, was really divided in operation to two strokes. One, purely German and purely mechanical (depending, that is to say, almost wholly on the weight of artillery), was directed from Kovel against the Styr-Stokhod or north-eastern sector of the salient. The other, probably looked upon as secondary and subsidiary, was an Austro-German assault on practically all the rest of the salient from the due west and from the south-west.

Despite their great losses, the enemy had a considerable force at their disposal in this area; and the fighting was of the most violent character, and persisted for little short of a fortnight. The Russians, who had crossed to the western bank of the Stokhod near Svidniki, were assailed with such desperation, and found themselves under such a hail of shell, that they were compelled to relinquish the bridgehead and withdraw to the eastern side of the river. For three days after this the struggle raged down to Kiesilen, over the whole of the north-east sector of the salient. Tiny villages started up into fame from the bloody combats that took place near them. The struggle fell back upon the old foot-by-foot warfare. Some of these tiny places changed hands several times in a day. Gruziatyn may be taken as a typical example. This tiny village for three days formed a storm centre. Situated two miles or so north of Gadamichi, and commanding a crossing on the Styr, it was smothered with shell, and evacuated by the Russians; counter-attacked and taken; shelled again and re-evacuated, not once but several times, on 20th June. The following day it was re-entered by the Russians, who in their swift onset took 11 officers and 400 men prisoners, and captured 6 machine guns. But in the end it had to be re-evacuated. Attacks to the south-west were less successful, but the Germans did not desist.

The Austrians seemed to have regained some of their spirit, for in the attacks on the apex of the salient they went forward in massed formation with the utmost bravery. On the point farthest west the Russian line was, for the moment, broken, and three guns of a battery were captured. They had fired their last shell. But the line was restored in a counter-attack; and the guns were recaptured with some others besides, and some prisoners. Further south the fighting was even less favourable to the enemy, and the inevitable roll of prisoners swelled. But with all these successful counter-attacks the Russians were finding upon which sectors the resistance was most expensive, and they gradually flattened the apex of the salient, withdrawing some five miles to Zatursky, and straightening also the south-western face, in places taking it in even as much as ten miles. In a week the first *élan* had worn off the Austro-German blow. But after a rest the munition dumps were replenished, the armies reorganised, and renewed onslaughts took place. The northern, centre, and southern faces were dented in a little, but the wedges could not be driven home. A pitch of desperation was reached in these attacks that can only be rightly understood by a comparison with the German attack on Krevo. Clouds were gathering in other quarters, and it was necessary to achieve something in Volhynia

before other sectors burst out into flames. But the uttermost efforts produced no result. It was reported that the weight of artillery used by the Germans had never been equalled on the Eastern front. There were vast howitzers up to 8-inch calibre, and a few of even heavier weight, hurling their high-explosive shells to cut up the ground as though an earthquake had struck it. But the Russian troops had tasted success, and were willing to pay for the thrilling draught.

**Capture of Czernovitz.**—And meanwhile Lechitsky was developing his successes in the south. Czernovitz was doomed when the Russians opened their offensive. Yet on 4th. June the population was *en fête* for the reopening of the university, and the Austrian Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of Staff were being made Doctors of Law. There seemed no comprehension of the fact that the country was at war, and that Russia was about to resume her offensive. When on the 11th it was announced that the city would be immediately under fire, panic seized upon the people. Trains leaving the station were stormed by frantic people anxious and determined to escape. Two days later the Russians were along the Pruth from the Rumanian frontier to near Sniatyn.

Czernovitz, lying on the south side of the river, was able to put up some further defence. The bridge had been destroyed, and the troops withdrawn across the river. Only a thin rearguard was left, and it covered the withdrawal very gallantly at the cost of its existence. To the north of the river, at Sadagova, the Austrians left stores and material behind; but their losses in men were not great, though, from the beginning of the offensive, in prisoners alone they had lost the equivalent of an army corps. From the hills on the southern bank of the river the Austrians commanded the crossing, and for three days they exacted their price for abandoning the capital; but on 16th June the devoted Russian sappers got a bridge across, and the men went over to the southern bank. The evacuation was begun at once. All was over. But the enemy left a thin rearguard, which was captured; and on the following day, at 4 P.M., while the Germans were battering at the Lutsk salient, the Russians entered the city. Only six civilians had been wounded by the Russian shells, which had been carefully and successfully kept from the city, and only the main railway station had been shelled and destroyed.

The rapid and successful advance of Lechitsky had virtually cut the army of Pflanzer-Baltin in two, and the capture of Czernovitz drove the southern front back on to the Carpathians. The northern or left wing fell back to cover and protect Kolomea—a function which was so essential to the safety of the army of Bothmer that thenceforward this detachment passed to his command. The Austrians fell back in haste from the Pruth to the Bukovina Sereth; but Lechitsky was not the sort of commander to allow them to take up positions which might have rendered his offensive merely a brilliant possibility. The day after the entry into Czernovitz the Russian advance guards were already at the Sereth crossings. They cleared their left flank up to the Rumanian frontier, and on the following day were over the Sereth. On 21st June they had captured Radautz. In four days this column had marched thirty miles, clearing its way methodically and driving the Austrians before it.

When we remember that another column was following the river valley to Kutu, some forty miles north-west of Radautz, while others were marching along the Dniester and along the Pruth, we begin to gather some adequate idea of the skill of Lechitsky, who directed the clearance of so extensive an area. If we conceive



the campaign like a hand with the wrist at the old winter line and the fingers wide outspread north-west, north, west, south-west, and south, we have a picture of the operations in this area. On 22nd June Kutý fell, and Gova Humová, twenty miles south of Radautz, was taken. The following day Kimpolung was captured with over 2,000 officers and men, and the Austrians were driven to the Carpathians. At the same time the other columns were clearing the north and west, and were closing in upon the famous junction of Kolomea, the key to the still more important Galician centre, Stanislaw.

The Bukovina had passed almost completely into the hands of Russia once more. It was a moral and political success of the most important character. It represented an almost unique military episode in the war. Less than three weeks had passed before this bulwark of Hungary had changed hands entirely. But its military value was even greater than its moral and political value. A glance at the map will convince any one that an enemy installed in the Bukovina is in a position to threaten the safety of Eastern Galicia. The Bukovina is, in fact, the flank of Eastern Galicia, and the later history of the campaign was to give evidence of its leverage.

But the month of June cuts off a convenient phase of the Russian offensive. A sort of lull set in during the last few days. Each side was a little breathless, and required time to mature its future course. The results of the month's fighting were sufficiently great. Russia had vindicated herself. Alexeieff, who had, under the Tsar, taken charge of the military fortunes of his country when they were at their lowest ebb, had nursed them with skilful husbandry, until they were restored beyond the dream of his enemy. It was chiefly his triumph; secondarily that of Brussiloff and his subordinates, who had all shown themselves soldiers of first-rate ability. The month's successes had made a huge bulge in the Austrian line from just below the Sarny-Kovel railway to the neighbourhood of Brody on the Rovno-Lemberg line. About Burkanov, on the Strypa, the line had been torn slightly from its old position, and the distance between it and the old line grew more and more towards the south, until at the Dniester there was another vast bulge towards the Carpathians.

Territorial gains are, however, at best symbols. The thing usually signified is absolute or temporary impotence. The advance at this point of the war differed from all others in that it found the enemy at a stage when recovery was almost impossible. It meant that the only final object of all war, the putting of armies out of the fight, was being achieved. At the end of the month the Russians had taken 217,000 prisoners, over a quarter of the troops who at the beginning of the offensive had held the line against them. The number of killed and wounded must have swelled the number of casualties to almost a third of the enemy's armies on this sector of the line. The captures of material were a very acceptable reinforcement of Russia's munitions of war. Thus does the bold offensive pay for itself.

The Russians had lost, and lost heavily; but their absolute loss was hardly half that of their enemy, and relatively it was incomparably less. On the side of the enemy the casualties at once reduced the shrinkage of troops to the critical point. The Trentino offensive was abandoned. Troops and guns were on their way to Galicia. Others had come from various parts of the German line; some from Albania and Servia. Even Turks were pressed in to restore the line. Austria had been reduced to its last gasp. It had already taken boys and old men and material of

doubtful physical quality. It had few more except returned convalescents and immature boys. Now it was Germany's turn. Where Austria failed, she had to come to the rescue for her own sake.

But while she was yet revolving the lesson, another stroke was preparing. The Western offensive was opening, and later on all the fronts would spring to life. Even this front was to go forward again, and another stroke was just about to fall. But the first phase of the Russian offensive was a splendid military achievement. Russia had made good.

### VIII. A SURVEY.

**Verdun.**—June 1916 saw the first real evidence of a turning-point in the war. Fortune seemed at first to favour the Germanic Powers almost exclusively. But the Russian advance established the fact that the Germans had not enough troops to be even perfectly safe upon all fronts. The Battle of Verdun continued, and carried the Germans nearest to that ruined shell before which they had been struggling for four months. By 21st May the summit of Dead Man Hill was no longer in the hands of the French, and the Crown Prince made a final effort to force the defenders back upon their main defences, in order to prepare for a decisive thrust on the right bank of the river. On the 23rd and 24th the main point of attack was transferred to the ground about the river bend. The village was completely occupied, and in a costly assault the Bavarians pressed along the railway to Chattancourt station. A vigorous counter-attack pressed them back towards Cumières and contained them there. An attack over the front from Avocourt to the river on the 29th, though made with five divisions, achieved no result.

But the critical point was no longer on the west bank of the river. Established once more in Douaumont fort and on the ridge, the Germans were able to look down upon the broken five miles of country which still cut them off from Verdun. On 25th May they captured Haudromont quarry, and a week later were able to clear Caillette Wood. On the two following days Bavarian troops made repeated attempts to carry Vaux fort. They attacked it on three sides; and though the storming troops who advanced up the hillside were mowed down, the fort was practically cut off from the evening of 2nd June. Within, Major Raynal, with some 500 troops, inspired the heroic defence. The fort was practically razed to the ground; and, cut off from the main defence, it held out for four days against every attack under a growing horror of thirst and hunger. On the 6th he had to give in, and only a handful of desperate men succeeded in escaping to the French lines. He was made a Commander of the Legion of Honour, and the Germans allowed him to retain his sword.

Five days later the Crown Prince's troops were less than four miles from Verdun; but Nivelle remained cool and resolute, and yielded yard by yard when the price had been exacted. On the 23rd five full divisions were flung at the centre, which now sagged towards the city. Thiaumont fort was captured. Fleury was entered, but almost instantly cleared again. The Germans were back again in Fleury the following day; but on the last day of the month the French recaptured Thiaumont fort and held it.

**The Irish Rebellion.**—It was during this terrible battle that the abortive rising



in Ireland occurred. On Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, the people in Dublin were surprised to find barricades in the streets of the capital, and still more astonished to learn that they were in the throes of a rebellion against British dominance. There are few, if any, parallels in history to so strange an event. Rebellions must be organised in secret; but they generally have their motive force in some distinct grievance, their occasion in some definite act of oppression, their leaders in men known and loved by the multitude.

The Irish rebellion was marked by none of these signs. Its leaders were unknown men; its driving force—so far as it was not merely engineered—was chiefly suspicion of treachery on the part of the British Government, and its occasion was arbitrarily chosen by the moving spirits. If the South African rebellion was a mistake, a solecism, the Irish rebellion was a tragedy, one of the worst tragedies of the whole of Ireland's troubled history. For it gathered to itself so much of idealism and heroism, and was marked by so much selflessness on the part of the rebels, that it deserved a better fate than to be met with the hostility of its own people and the crude repression of the military administration.

It was the moribund Clan-na-Gael which, stirring anew to life on Mr. Redmond's appeal in September 1914, formed the leaven that in time fermented through the whole of the small rebel body. It revealed itself as irreconcilable, and more pleased with frank misrule than with Home Rule. Part of the Irish Volunteers—perhaps 10,000 of the 170,000—adhered to Mr. John M'Neill in regarding themselves purely as a defence force; and it is hard to think that M'Neill was cognisant of any intercourse with the enemy. It is certain he was ridden by and did not control the sinister elements that energised the body of which he was thought to be the head. But the soil in which the rebellion was prepared was the blunders of Britain. The Home Rule Bill was not put on the Statute Book at once, and the feeling grew that its appearance there at all was doubtful; and even if it did go so far, the amending Bill was thought by many to filch any good that still remained in the Bill. What a field for suspicion and distrust was left here!

The ill-feeling was fermented by the ill-judged manner in which the recruiting campaign was carried on. Well-known Unionist agents appeared in Nationalist districts, and the threats of conscription that were made in Great Britain were made also in Ireland. Even Irish seminarists were persuaded that they were to be called up. The peculiar repercussion of such a factor was that it suggested the certainty of Irish young men being called upon to face death. But if they were to be forced to fight, why not fight for the cause that lay nearest their hearts—Irish freedom? It is almost strange that the cogency of such an appeal in an atmosphere so full of suspicion did not secure more recruits.

Along with the fear of conscription there went the fear of disarmament, which in some ways struck deeper, for it raised a more imminent question. The agitators at the back of the insurrectionary movement desired nothing better than that Mr. Birrell should attempt the disarmament of the Nationalists. He was, in fact, blamed by the Hardinge Commission for not pursuing this course, but his wisdom and justice were shown in his behaviour on this as on other questions. Hardly any point could be clearer than this, for in default of any attempt at unjust aggression the agitators were actually forced to forge the proof that it was meditated. General Friend's order for the leaders to be arrested and their arsenals to be raided had no existence outside the minds of some of the Clan-na-Gael.

The position of Casement in the rebellion is hard to determine. He seems to have gone to Germany on his own initiative. There is little proof of intercourse between him and them. M'Evoy and the Clan-na-Gael had in America the enthusiastic mischief-makers of the German Embassy, and there could have been no need to send Casement to Germany. As to his mission, his attempts to form an Irish brigade for service in Ireland, it had but the smallest success. The Germans admitted him to the camps freely ; but he was hooted by the bulk of the Irish, and the few who joined him seem to have been partly under a misapprehension and partly persuaded by the promise of better food. It is necessary to state that there is some evidence that Casement's suggestion at his trial, that the men were to be enlisted for service *after the war*, is true. But this was not produced at the trial. Monteith, the accredited messenger of the rebels to Germany, brought back the most unsatisfactory reports ; and it is clear that the arrival of Casement was a coincidence and nothing more.

M'Neill only heard of the movement on Saturday night, and he sent a notice to the Sunday papers countermanding the "manœuvres." By so doing, he robbed the rebellion of many of its numbers ; but woke on Sunday to find that he had not in fact the power he seemed to have. A number of the rebels met on Sunday ; but the actual attack had to be postponed to the following day.

The number of the rebels was small. Their armament was even more quixotic. Some of the men had less than thirty rounds, and a few minutes' rapid firing would have shot away the ammunition of all. Their strategy was merely good by implication. They attempted to cut the communications with Curragh and Kingstown ; but only partially succeeded in the latter case, and utterly failed in the former. They seized the post office, thereby securing the internal telegraphic communications ; but they failed to capture the Telephone Exchange and the Amiens Street telegraph office. Direct connection with England was therefore left open. Trinity College, a potential fortress of supreme value, was not seriously threatened. It was easily held by the Staff, with a mixture of careful defensive work and bluff. Thus once more the rebellion was doomed. Germany had failed the intriguers ; the Clan-na-Gael's high-handed treatment of M'Neill had recoiled on themselves, by leading to his stealing half the strength of the movement at its outset.

When it got under way the rebellion was only kept going as long as it lasted by legends and deceitful reports such as those which had brought it into being. German help was approaching ; all Ireland had risen ; the Ecclesiastical Authorities had blessed the movement. These were some of the less crude reports with which the men were heartened. Yet Ireland as a whole remained unmoved, except with indignation at the rebels. In many places in the south, in Wexford and Limerick, the National Volunteers offered their services, and with the military preserved order. Only at a few places was there any disturbance. At Neath a body of police was captured when its ammunition had been expended. At Ennis-corthy an amicable rising took place, and subsided with bloodshed ; and at Athenry (Galway) there was the same harmless diversion.

But where the men fought the utmost courage was shown. Irishmen were utterly surprised at the amazing courage of the English soldiers. Many were Territorials, half trained and wholly unused to fighting. Yet two of the professors of Trinity College described to the present writer their utter amazement at seeing these raw boys act with a courage and discipline that was near to madness. They



would rush a position held by rebels behind iron railings a square inch in cross section. They were received by the people with every possible welcome, and were inclined to be a little bewildered on realising that they were supposed to put down an Irish rebellion while the Irish populace seemed to be unable sufficiently to spoil them.

There were some dark pages in their record. A number of bodies were dug up from a cellar, where they had been buried after being shot. The number was said to be over twelve, and a distinguished British journalist stated that he himself had seen seven. An inquest held upon two of the bodies resulted in a verdict that the men died from bullet wounds inflicted by "soldiers in whose charge they were—unarmed and unoffending persons."

The case of Mr. Sheehy Skeffington was one of the grave miscarriages, and it merely obtained a notoriety owing to the well-known character of the victim and the vigorous way his wife followed up the case. He was a well-known journalist and pacifist, and he was taken out by Captain Bowen-Colthurst with a patrol as a hostage. Early on the following morning, on the instructions of the same officer, a firing party took Mr. Skeffington and two other men out and shot them. Later on an inquiry was held, and Captain Bowen-Colthurst was ordered, on medical evidence, to be detained at a criminal lunatic asylum. His behaviour from first to last had been extraordinary. But it was scenes like these which turned the first instinctive anger against the rebels to resentment against the British.

On Saturday an armistice for three hours was arranged, and at the end Pearse, a prisoner for two days, issued an order as follows:—

"In order to prevent further slaughter of unarmed people, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers, now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, members of the provisional Government at present at headquarters have agreed to unconditional surrender, and the commanders of all units of the republican forces will order their followers to lay down their arms."

With Pearse, Connolly, the brains of the movement, was a prisoner. On Sunday the rebels holding Jacob's biscuit factory and St. Stephen's Green surrendered, and the rebellion as a rebellion was over. Lower Sackville Street was practically destroyed, with about fifty yards area around it. Many famous buildings were made ruins. On the preceding night the flames seemed to be eating up the whole northern side of the city, and the fire brigade, working under rebel fire at times, could not cope with the situation. The damage to property was estimated at £2,500,000.

The greatest problem, however, remained after the rebellion had been put down. Sir John Maxwell had been sent over to deal with the situation, and he was credited with many indiscreet remarks. From the answers to questions in Parliament, it seemed that his powers were so ambiguous that without superseding him he had to be left a free hand. In justice to Sir John Maxwell, it must be pointed out that though the field court-martials were military in form, their sanction was not martial law, but the Defence of the Realm Act with its small restriction on arbitrary use swept away by a Proclamation of April 26.

For at the moment Ireland as a whole was far more angry with this handful of unknown plotters than with any one. Prudent statesmanship would have reaped the profit of the recoil. Instead of this the series of death penalties began. On Wednesday a field general court-martial sentenced P. H. Pearse (the commander-in-chief of the forces), Thomas MacDonagh (the poet), and T. J. Clarke to death, and they were shot.

These were the first executions ; and Sir Edward Carson on this very day was adding his voice to that of Mr. Redmond in an appeal for mercy. " No true Irishman calls for vengeance," he said ; " it will be a matter requiring the greatest wisdom and the greatest calmness in dealing with these men." But on the following day William Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Edward Daly, and Michael O'Hanrahan were shot. Plunkett was a son of Count Plunkett of the National Museum, and the night before execution he was married in prison to Miss Grace Gifford, a sister-in-law of Thomas MacDonagh. On 5th May Major M'Bride, the commander at Jacob's biscuit factory, a man who had fought for the Boers in the South African War, was shot. The succession began to make numerous people restive. There were a secrecy and inevitability about the court-martial enactments that tended to turn sympathy in favour of the rebels. The young men died so valiantly too.

A sort of respite occurred on 6th and 7th May ; but this only seemed to make the resumption of the executions on 8th May more unsettling. On that day four other rebels were shot. It was on this day that Mr. Redmond warned the Prime Minister that the continuance of the executions was changing the state of feeling in Ireland, and three days later Mr. Dillon, in a speech of great bitterness, moved a resolution of protest. Mr. Asquith met the case by announcing his intention to go to Ireland at once and see for himself how things stood.

But on the morning of the 12th, when he arrived in Ireland, James Connolly, who had been taken wounded, and John MacDermott were shot. Connolly and MacDermott were both signatories to the Proclamation of the Republic, and the former was the organiser of the Citizen Army and of the Sinn Fein Army. And besides these executions, there were about 120 rebels who received other sentences, ranging from one year's penal servitude to penal servitude for life. Professor M'Neill took no actual part in the rising ; indeed, he endeavoured to stop it, and undoubtedly robbed it of much of its strength. But he was the author of the Sinn Fein Volunteers, and was sentenced to penal servitude for life. The Countess Markiewicz received a similar sentence.

The trial of Casement, under the circumstances, lost its poignancy. His work in the Congo and Putomayo was remembered by the world at large. Englishmen remembered also that he had accepted a title from an English Foreign Minister and written a gushing letter of gratitude. He had been arrested on the shores of Kerry three days preceding the outbreak of the rising. He was taken to England, to be tried by law for treason.

He was tried by the Lord Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Avory, and Mr. Justice Horridge. Mr. Serjeant Sullivan, K.C., chose as his line of defence an ingenious argument, but failed to save his client.

Mr. Sullivan carried his case to the Appeal Court, and again lost it. There lay still the House of Lords, but the consent of Sir F. E. Smith had to be obtained. He withheld it, and Casement was deprived of his honours, and executed on 3rd August. He had previously been received into the Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. Birrell later resigned, as did also the Lord-Lieutenant. The Royal Commission appointed to investigate the causes of the outbreak found, as might have been expected, that the main cause was " that lawlessness was allowed to grow up unchecked, and that Ireland for several years had been administered on the principle that it was safer and more expedient to leave the law in abeyance if collision with any faction of the Irish people could thereby be avoided." But the solution of



the Irish question was not advanced thereby; and though the rebellion had had no effect upon Britain's war effort, it gave a good case to her enemies.

**The British Front.**—The Irish rebellion did not produce even a ripple on the surface of the war. In the middle of March General Allenby's 3rd Army took over from the French twelve miles of line opposite Souchez and Vimy, and the fighting, which never wholly died down over the battle fronts, continued, with small climaxes now and then. On 27th March an attempt was made to reduce the German salient at St. Eloi, which, containing the rising ground of the Mound, gave observation over the British positions. It was to be taken in flank by the 4th Royal Fusiliers on the left and the 1st Northumberlanders on the right. The explosion of five mines gave the signal for the assault. The ground, only half won, was held until a fresh attack on 2nd April was delivered by the 8th Royal Lancashires, who improved the position and handed it over to the 27th Winniegs. They held their ground precariously until the 6th, when a counter-attack found the 29th Vancouvers relieving them. For three days the struggle continued at a pitch of desperation. But on the 10th the Canadians still held the bulk of the ground.

On the 19th there were several German assaults on the Ypres salient. Some were stopped; but one at Langemarck gained a foothold in the British trenches. The 10th Shropshires recovered the lost ground on the 21st. A similar fate befell the gas attack on the 16th Irish Division, south of Hulluch, on the 27th; and there were minor assaults at the Hohenzollern Redoubt, in the middle of May, and on Vimy Ridge. In June there was an attack on the Hooze sector of the Canadian front. In this last attack the German intention was to forestall the coming Somme attack. In the previous actions the aim of both sides was to pin the troops to their positions and prevent any reinforcement of either side at Verdun. After a terrific bombardment and the explosion of mines the Canadians' line was driven in, 500 men, including General Williams and Colonel Usher, were taken prisoners, and General Mercer was killed. An immediate counter-attack carried the men back very nearly to their old front; but not till the 13th were they able to recapture their lost trenches, and with them the ammunition left there. The whole operation cost the Canadians 7,000 casualties, and they took only 170 prisoners. But the losses were fairly equal, and already the preparations for the Somme offensive were dwarfing these comparatively minor exchanges.

At the end of June the Verdun offensive had not ended, the Russian was at a pause, and elsewhere over the surface of the war there hung the ominous passivity of preparation. It was soon to be broken in the West, East, and South.

## BOOK IV.

### THE SECOND ALLIED OFFENSIVE IN THE WEST

(July 1, 1916–April 1917)

THE period which began with the Battle of the Somme and ended with the great retreat which it caused was the bloodiest of the whole war. Never before, and never again, were so many great armies engaged at once. Never before, and never again, was Germany assailed from so many sides simultaneously. In no other period did the Allies secure so many successes in the field. And finally, we must add, in no other period did the German armies give such proof of their training, their courage, and their skill.

Germany ended this phase as surely in the decline as she had ended the 1915 campaign in the ascendant. The masterly skill and coolness of her defensive must not blind us to the fact that, but for the Russian Revolution, Germany's doom would have been sealed within the year. It came at a time when the British fighting strength had reached its maximum. As Sir Douglas Haig justly remarks, "Had she [Russia] been able to carry out her military engagements, the war might have been shortened by a year." Germany's greatest victory in the war was the undermining of the political organisation of Russia through the great offensive of 1915, through treachery and intrigue; and in the ruins of the old *régime* her military strength was engulfed.

Although the German armies were hard pressed in the first half of the year 1917, the defection of Russia gave the enemy a new lease of life, and the Western Allies had the task of achieving superiority to begin afresh. The apparent non-success of the Allies had much to do with the political movements in all the Allied countries. In France, M. Briand reconstructed the Government, with General Lyautey, the famous Colonial soldier, at the Ministry of War; and the High Command. Joffre became a marshal of France, a title well merited by his services to his country; and Nivelle went for a short time to General Headquarters. In the Italian Chamber a motion in favour of immediate peace was brought forward, but was rejected by a great majority at the end of November. In Russia, the discontent was not appeased until it had flowered in the Revolution. In Great Britain, Mr. Lloyd George replaced Mr. Asquith, and appointed to his War Cabinet Mr. Bonar Law the Chancellor, Lord Curzon the President of the Council, and Lord Milner and Mr. Henderson as Ministers without portfolios.

The Allies were dominant, and yet not sufficiently so. They were powerful enough to drive the enemy back and inflict huge losses upon him. But they could not expel him from occupied territory, and their own losses were very heavy. Only in one part of the vast perimeter of the war was success indisputable and unalloyed.



General Maude captured Baghdad, the city of the Caliphs, and shook the pillars of the Turkish Empire. But this brilliant victory was too remote from Germany, and indeed even from the heart of Turkey, to have any profound or immediate effect upon the main issue of the war. Yet the total casualty list of the last six months of 1916 must have been between three and four million—a terrible purge of the world's best blood.

## I. THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME: THE FIRST LINE.

A GLANCE over the whole battlefield at the end of June revealed a drastic change in the condition of things during the month. The Austrian offensive in the Trentino had come to naught. The German assault on Verdun still continued, but it had become a sheer waste of life. In the East the Austrian blow had given Russia a great opportunity. The lines south of the Pripet had been broken open over a large front, and the whole of the Bukovina was in the hands of Brussileff's troops.

The Russian offensive had been anticipated. So great an opportunity for dealing a smashing blow at the lines which Austria had left weak could hardly be expected to recur, and hence Alexeieff had seized his chance, though his plans had been laid for a thrust towards Vilna. But the plan which the Allies had concerted for the summer contemplated a simultaneous attack by all, and it was not possible to strike on the west and south when Russia struck. To this extent General Falkenhayn had been successful with his offensives against Verdun and Venetia; and it is interesting to imagine what would have been the Russian success had it been assisted by an offensive over the whole battle-front. The divisions which the Germans rushed to the assistance of their ally about Kovel and in Galicia would have been detained in the West, and Brussiloff might have broken the whole Austro-German line in the East.

The end of June witnessed the prologue to another Allied offensive. One sector of the battle-front was the scene of major operations. Yet another was to burst into activity. Military students had long realised that the decisive battle of the war must be fought in the West. It was there the main German armies lay, and though the period now reached witnessed a weakening of these forces in favour of the East, so that in a few months the West had only a little more than half the total German number, the density of the troops was still considerably greater than elsewhere, and they were the flower of Germany's army. Furthermore, the West was incomparably more highly developed industrially, and hence there alone could the engines of war, so necessary to break the elaborate German defensive system, be provided in the quantities required.

France and Britain, after the period of preparation ensured to them by the British navy, could sooner or later hope to equal, and eventually surpass, the munition output which Germany had achieved with ease. Her long and intense pre-occupation with warlike preparation gave her the abundant plant and the intimate acquaintance with its uses which could only be achieved by the Allies in time. Finally, the far higher level of general intelligence and education in the West, and the fact that the Allied lines lay so much nearer German territory, made this front a vastly more intimate concern of the German Staff.

In France and Belgium the Allies must face and overcome the main enemy,

assisted by all those intricate and cunning devices he had so patiently evolved. If he could not stand there, it mattered little where he advanced. Short of putting Russia out of the fight, nothing could make up for a failure on the West ; and failure to a certain extent on this front admitted of no compensation. It would be decisive and final. Falkenhayn had tried to finish off Russia, but had merely gained a respite. And he failed at Warsaw and Brest, more signally than at Vilna. If he had not weakened Hindenburg when the German marshal made his last attempt to envelop part of the Russian armies near Vilna, a *local* decision might have been reached, though it was clear to all observers that the Germans had "shot their bolt," and a serious reverse in Galicia might have been the result. On the other hand, if the Allies could not win in the West, they could not win. This does not ignore the fact that each victory in the East would call off more and more German troops ; and since it is infantry who in the end hold even the most perfect defences, there must come a time when the Allies—if they held together—could break through, restore a war of movements, and decisively defeat the Germanic alliance. But how long would it be delayed, and would the Allied resources—economic, mechanical, numerical, and moral—be sufficient ?

The Western front was, therefore, the critical front ; and toward the end of June the German Staff began to be aware of the fact that it was about to be put to the test. The tremendous battles at Verdun had failed to involve the British troops, and these were available for an offensive. Examine the conformation of this front in June 1916. The German line stretched like a rough sickle from the Belgian to the Swiss frontier. Conceive the handle to start somewhere near the Lorraine frontier towards Metz, and a marked difference can be observed in the nature of the line. The cutting edge of the sickle would embrace practically all the occupied territory. The handle lay near the frontier and at length crossed it into Upper Alsace, lying athwart the Vosges mountains towards Kolmar.

Apart from the fact that this part of the line was less favourable to major operations, owing to the nature of the country, a blow here would at this time have little effect upon the rest of the line. While the Germans lay near Soissons and Reims, any attempt at a diversion through Alsace or Lorraine would be countered by a threat to the heart of France. The same is true of an offensive on the extreme northern flank. Two parts of the line, however, presented attractive prospects for an offensive. A successful thrust through Champagne would cut the German line in two, and place the German occupation of France and Belgium in jeopardy. But such an offensive would either throw the whole onus on France, who had suffered too heavily already, or would, if conducted by the British, present grave difficulties as to communications.

The other sector of the line that offered the best results to successful attack was that which covered Ypres and Compiègne. An army's communications are its life-line. Cut them, and the life-blood will cease to flow to its members. Any advance on this sector comparable with that of Brussiloff would have cut the main lateral communications of the German army in France and Belgium ; and if it could be made with sufficient speed, the Allies would have taken the first great step towards the defeat of their enemy. Failing such an achievement, the Allies could methodically crush the German armies and bring them to final exhaustion. It is probable that this western-facing sector of the line was the best that could be selected for an offensive. The British now held the ninety miles of the front from above Ypres to



the Somme, and a great offensive would allow the new and eager armies to strike their blow for civilisation. Foch, the finest general in the world, had the control of



General Map of the Ground between the Ancre and the Somme.

the sector; and if the French were to co-operate, they would have behind them his extraordinary fire and skill.

It was, in fact, on this sector that the choice fell. Amiens was the base from which the Allies struck. The historic city lies on the Somme, a river that flows

eastward through marshy banks towards Péronne, about eight miles west of the point where it is joined by the Ancre, which runs north-east towards Bapaume. Amiens is an important railway centre. Main lines connect it with Paris, with Havre, with Abbeville and the Channel coast ; while other main lines run via Albert to Arras and to La Fère. Numerous subsidiary lines cross the main arteries, as well as flow directly to the centre. It is, in fact, the centre of Normandy, and no other place between Calais and Paris has any facilities remotely comparable to it as a base for operations directed eastward between the coast and the capital.

Between Arras and the Somme the Germans had established their positions beyond the low hills that shield the plain about Bapaume. The actual line, south of Arras, bent to the west ; so that a north and south line from Arras would practically cut off the British to about Maricourt, where the French sector began. Bapaume and Péronne, some twelve miles to the south-east, were the centres of the German defence. The former lay about eight or ten miles from the nearest point of the line, while the latter was little more than half the distance. The ground in front of the British and French was also different.

In front of the French, particularly south of the Somme, the contours were opener and the country flatter. The British had to attack up steep slopes and in hilly country. All the ground was highly organised for defence, based upon the villages of Gommecourt, Serre, Thiepval, Ovilliers, La Boisselle, Fricourt, Mametz, Curlu, Frise, Dompierre, Fay, Soyecourt, and Vermandovilliers. There were three lines of trenches with underground burrows and shelters between them for men and guns, and the "first" line was from a third to two-thirds of a mile deep. No description can do justice to these "lines." On the Staff maps they looked like the pattern of some elaborate crochet work, and we have seen the possibilities of such defences in the Champagne offensive of autumn 1915. From the north to the south, from Gommecourt to Fay, the front was about twenty-eight miles in extent—the British occupying some twenty miles, and the French about eight.

The assault was to be made by the five corps of General Rawlinson's 4th Army, with the 7th Corps (General Snow) of General Allenby's 3rd Army, on the left. There were nineteen divisions allotted to the attack, some 200,000 infantry ; and the corps commanders of Rawlinson's army were Hunter-Weston (8th), Morland (10th), Pulteney (3rd), Home (15th), and Congreve (13th). The 6th French Army, under General Fayolle, and the 10th Army, under Micheler, co-operated on the south of the British line. On the German side General Fritz von Below was in command of the 2nd Army. The Germans were not caught napping. They hung out boards with the words, "Come on ; we are ready." But they had not expected the attack to extend below the Albert road, and the first day's battle clearly showed how formidable could be their defence when thoroughly prepared.

The preparations for the attack were of an elaborateness that almost surpasses imagination. The Germans had long pronounced their lines impregnable, and no detail that could ensure success was to be omitted from the preparation. The main roads were doubled, so that the motor transport might be unhindered by foot traffic, which had to keep to its own avenue. As at Verdun, every corner had its signposts with distances and directions thereon, as well as ominous warnings to troops as to the danger from German guns. There were fields and fields of ammunition dumps, with new light railways to the front. Over 500 miles of railways were laid, and they were extended as the advance went ahead. The motor transport,



upon which the French had relied so much at Verdun, was here developed even more extensively; and there were nearly 2,000 fresh wells sunk for drinking water.

The ammunition dumps were cunningly concealed by low ground-coloured canvas roofs, so that enemy aeroplanes could gather little information from above. There were stores of every kind—trench-roofing, flooring, pontoon sections, thousands of beds, miles of barbed wire with thousands of support posts. There were hundreds of aeroplanes, scouting machines, and war-planes continually in the air. And there was a vast concentration of guns—some of them huge mortars of over 15-inch calibre, others howitzers with a range of nearly 16 miles—to attempt to keep down the barrage from the long-range German guns or explode German ammunition dumps, destroy bridges, viaducts, junctions.

Even the commissariat rose to almost legendary extent, with its intricate system of bases, advanced bases, divisional, brigade, battalion, and company depots. The French were ever a little amused at the thoroughness with which the British "Tommy" needed to be plied before he could be quite happy about fighting. Indeed his insistence upon bathing and shaving, his clinging to the decencies of civilian life, his huge quantities of mere meat, formed subjects of amazed reflection on the part of French correspondents. And the French were not slow to point out that this was really the improvised army of the British Empire that was in the field. The clerks, miners, factory hands, navvies, writers, artists, musicians of yesterday had gone through their training, and were now grumbling with an amusing gravity about the food and taking the rest with a laugh. This remains to be borne in mind when we read of the triumphs of the British army.

The greatest campaign in which the British army had ever been engaged opened with several days' preliminary bombardment. The Ministry of Munitions had done its work well, and behind the British lines there was so great an accumulation of artillery that in places the guns were too closely placed even to be able to fire. The German defensive system had been marked down with a completeness that is difficult to grasp in view of these "steel barriers" that the rival armies had erected between them. It was here that the Allied air service came to its own. Flying day after day above the enemy lines, pilots took innumerable photographs of the works beneath them. Stretched below like petrified spiders' webs lay the intricate defensive works. Miles of barbed wire had gone to prepare initial obstacles to advancing troops; concrete redoubts with steel emplacements for machine guns lay beyond. All that could be seen was comparatively easy to cope with. The barbed wire was easily disposed of by the light field guns, particularly the efficient 75's. The trench mortars of all sizes accounted for the first-line trenches, the howitzers dealing with the second and third lines. But the Allies, even in July 1916, had not sufficient long-range guns to subdue altogether the German curtain fire. And beyond these obstacles, which were visible, were the underground caverns and tunnels in which the Germans might be concealed, only to emerge with machine guns against the infantry advance. These obstacles still presented the worst terror to an attack; yet low-flying aeroplanes in front of the assaulting columns did something to deal with this menace, as well as to inform the field guns when to lengthen the range of the protective curtain fire under which the troops went forward.

The efficiency of these preparations was best gathered from the accounts of German correspondents. One of their descriptions was a classic in depicting the inferno the Allied fire created. The trenches were beaten to dust. The howitzers

scooped out craters which the infantry tried to occupy ; but these huddled, terrified, together. Aeroplanes would sweep down and harry them from machine guns. Clouds of dust, fragments of timber, pieces of concrete, and worst of all the debris of their own men, were flung upon them, so that when the precarious commissariat came to supply them at night the men's souls sickened at the mere sight of flesh. Troops were caught in billets and smashed to bits ; troop trains were blown to atoms ; ammunition dumps were exploded ; villages were fired. The wonder is that the men could stand such hellish conditions and be ready to repel the furious assaults of the British infantry. We can form some idea of the extent of the artillery preparation from the fact that, as the battle began, the artillery personnel was equal to about half that of the attacking infantry ; and on 1st July nearly 13,000 tons of artillery ammunition was fired by the British alone.

Another part of the preparation was an elaborate series of raids undertaken over the whole ninety miles of British front. Their rôle was partly to mislead the Germans, and partly to inform the Allied command as to the enemy dispositions. Gas was frequently released—during the last week at least forty times. Sometimes a raid followed ; sometimes it did not. And the nerves of the German troops were kept on edge by these threats and the searching bombardment, until even the attack must have been welcomed as a relief.

The battle was planned to begin on 28th June, but the weather was so bad that it was three days before it seemed wise to attack. On Saturday, 1st July, the Allies began the attack proper at 7.30, in the dull heat of the morning. At first everything seemed to go as well as it had promised. The left advanced towards Gommecourt, Serre, and Beaumont ; but the support which should have enabled the troops to hold their captures was wanting. A prompt and well-delivered counter-attack led to a retirement in the Gommecourt sector, and here two battalions of Sherwood Foresters lost very heavily, and a battalion of the London Scottish was almost annihilated. The German barrage cut off all help, and the men were mowed down as they attempted to retire. In the Serre-Beaumont sector, similarly, the troops had to fall back, and above the Ancre little progress was made. The gallantry of the advance was wasted. The preliminary bombardment had not been sufficient to reach the garrisons in their deep dug-outs, and when the waves of British infantry had passed the first line the men emerged with machine guns and took the storming troops in the rear. The 29th Division, already assured of undying fame from its exploits in Gallipoli, were on the right of Hunter-Weston's Corps. All the regiments fought with courage and enthusiasm, the Newfoundland Regiment—lumbermen, fishermen, and farmers—living up to the division's highest traditions. But to no purpose. On this sector of the line the defence could not be broken, and at the end of the day that battle was fought and lost. And yet not wholly lost, since it was the heroic fighting on this sector which pinned the Germans to their positions, and so made possible the advance farther south.

Even below the Ancre, between the stream and the Albert-Bapaume road, however, the British made little advance. But the Irish (Ulster) regiments of the 36th Division, wrote one imperishable page of history. They stormed the first, second, third, and even fourth lines. They penetrated over two miles into the German defences, passed Thiepval, and entered the Schwaben Redoubt. It was three months before it was entered again. When compelled to retire they carried back 540 prisoners. Thiepval, which was one of the most formidable centres of the



defensive system, had been treated unmercifully by the artillery; but many lives were lost in assaulting it, and it remained unshaken. The Prussian Guard Division, who fought there, was able to cut off the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers, who had gone too far, and it was three months before this stronghold fell.

Below the Albert-Bapaume road, however, the centre and right of the British and the left and centre of the French achieved notable successes. La Boisselle, where cemetery vaults for some months in the preceding winter were the scene of a ghastly struggle, was penetrated but not held; but Mametz and Montauban, farther south, were captured. At the last-named place the triumph was that of the Manchester troops ("pals" battalions)—men drawn from offices and factories—who seized the village with great gallantry and skill, and, with the Scots Fusiliers, carried the line to the ridge beyond.

The fortified village of Fricourt had been left behind. Cut off from support completely, it held out for a day, but on Sunday afternoon surrendered to the inevitable.

At the end of the first day over 2,000 prisoners were taken, and the victorious troops found on the ground ample evidence of the loss they had inflicted on the enemy. The French at the same time went forward—Balfourier's "Iron" (20th) Corps being on the left, the 39th ("Steel") Division in touch with the British. The Colonial Corps, under General Baudelat, and the 35th Corps of General Allonier formed the rest of Fayolle's army. They got into Hardecourt and Curlu, north of the Somme, while to the south of the river they seized the villages of Dompierre, Becquincourt, Bossu, and Fay, with 3,500 prisoners. The British advance had penetrated to a depth of about 1,000 yards, over a front of seven miles; while the French had pushed their line forward over nearly nine miles, to a depth which at places reached nearly two miles.

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The following day the troops went ahead once more. Heavy fighting developed against the British, but at the end of the day the toll of prisoners had reached 3,500. The French on the right were more successful. Hardecourt and Curlu were cleared, the 11th ("Iron") Division of the 20th Corps, after a fierce struggle, winning the cemetery of Curlu. South of the Somme, the village of Frise and the wood of Méréancourt, over a mile to the east, were taken, and the total of prisoners for the two days was swelled to 6,000.

The next days were spent with a pronounced effort to extend and strengthen the British left. Ovillers and La Boisselle were the scene of most bitter fighting. A part of La Boisselle was recaptured on Monday by the German counter-attacks, which were made in great force. To the north of this village the German first line lay still substantially intact, and even La Boisselle was not wholly and securely in the hands of the British until Wednesday morning. A slight advance was made near Montauban; but the French, meanwhile, profiting by the diversion on their left, were making good progress. While the British were fighting heroically for what they had won, the French were taking a great stride forward.

On Monday they had cut into the German second defensive system, and were in the outskirts of Feuillères, nearly two miles east of Frise. They took Herbecourt, Assevillers, Buscourt, and Flacourt. The last-named village, only three miles from Péronne, was entered without the loss of a single life, so perfect were the French leading and co-operation between artillery and infantry. Heavy German

reinforcements were rushed to the Somme, but they were unable to prevent the French from pushing out their lines still farther. On Tuesday Estrées fell to the troops of Allonier, and Belloy-en-Santerre, with a wood lying to the north, was captured by the Foreign Legion. The following day, in spite of further German reinforcements, Fayolle's troops had advanced to within two miles of Péronne, and had captured the whole of the German second defensive system south of the Somme on a front of seven miles. At Belloy they held a footing in the third line. The British had made small advances, and had captured 6,000 prisoners to the 9,500 of the French.

The first battle of the great offensive may be taken as having ended on 6th July. There were four great battles in the Somme campaign. Two of these, from the 1st to 6th July, and from the 14th to the 18th, fell within the first phase. The third great battle lasted from the 3rd to the 8th September, rounding off the second phase; and the fourth, from the 15th to the 20th September, began the last phase. But in between a thousand desperate engagements were fought with the same courage and determination.

From the Albert-Bapaume road to below Estrées the whole of the first defensive system had been carried, and below the Somme the second defensive system had been taken, with intermediate positions between the lines. The French were able to look into Péronne from across the river, and were preparing for a second spring. Some 15,500 prisoners were in the hands of the Allies, and they had inflicted so heavy a loss on the enemy that battalions and whole divisions were rushed into the Somme fighting from other parts of the front.

Yet this bald narrative fails to do justice to the extraordinary spirit of the attackers. The East Surrey men, who went forward dribbling footballs, stand out as a wonderful, if somewhat pathetic, picture. They went ahead until they recovered some of the balls in the German trenches.

There were guns brought back and various sorts of equipment from the elaborate entrenchments with which the Germans had thought to hold themselves secure against all attack. There was, indeed, some reason to take this view; and it is but just to those who went forward with a jest, from this pleasant land of Picardy into the valley of death, to state that the German courage was not inferior to that of the Allies. Only the superb daring of some of the units prevented this first battle achieving a decisive success.

Some of the communication trenches were lined with timber, and were tunnelled to such a depth that it is difficult to understand how they could be affected by any bombardment. The dug-outs were commodious buildings, dug deep in the earth like those dwellings in the moon which Mr. Wells has imagined. Entrance was by a steel door. The staircases down to the suites of rooms, in two or three stories, were as well made as those of many houses. The walls, roof, and floors were match-boarded, so that the rooms not only appeared but actually were comfortable. Nothing but a chance shell through an open door could touch such dwellings. The excavated earth, by a ready ingenuity, was used for the sandbags to strengthen the parapets.

To advance against lines in which such strongholds abounded was to tempt Providence. The deep dug-outs would hold numbers of men, ready to sally forth with machine guns when the infantry advanced. The defenders would be secure even from shell shock. Their nerves would not be wracked by the storm of the



bombardment, and the fact that the trenches were in ruins about them was part of their immunity. Under cover of the debris they were hard to locate. Especially was this so in the villages. Cottages with cellars offered the foundation of the incredible burrowings, and when the house was in ruins, steel-supported loopholes below the walls with a wide field of fire gave the opportunity to sweep a street, or even a number of approaches.

After the advancing troops there had to go companies of trench-clearers ; and, again, it is amazing to find that men who were engaged in civilian occupations last year undertook this work with such *sangfroid*. The officer walked fairly briskly at the head with drawn revolver, and his men with bombs and bayonets followed. If the enemy stood, much life might be lost before he was dealt with ; if he came out and surrendered, he might be quickly passed to the rear, and the company would go ahead. Struggles took place at times. The German troops would surrender readily when they saw there was no hope, but an officer might as readily fight. Sometimes a British soldier tackled such a resister with his fists ; at other times he would leap at the man and try to throttle him to save his own life.

Very primitive and unorthodox were the tactics in some of these encounters. The bayonet did its work with deadly facility generally. A ready bomb hurled into the door of a dug-out would speedily end resistance, and when other means failed the enemy was at times smoked out. These incidents, again, neglect the other and sadder side of the conflict. When the men leaped from their trenches, some would slide back at once and remain standing aloft, lifelike, against the deep trench wall, shot dead. Other human bodies would lie between the lines, a pitiable heap of human material. Men would fall in the fierce rush forward, and would lie dead and sometimes wounded while the swift artillery galloped past or over them.

And when the lust of battle was over, or before passion had entered into the men, one could see their gay, laughing faces as they ate their meal or marched trimly forward to support. These boys and youths, or fathers of men, who had never thought to fight, were but amateurs ; but even when they were regularly enlisted troops they still preserved that humorous equipoise that refused to be daunted by the infernal horror of the whole thing. And that, perhaps, is the most pitiable reflection of the first great baptism of fire of Britain's voluntary armies.

## II. THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME : THE SECOND LINE.

THE Allied offensive on the Somme did not develop like the decisive battles of long ago. That it was designed to be decisive, and was accepted as such, there is abundant evidence. But it was not a battle involving a concentrated effort of a few days, or perhaps a week, which yielded such obvious results that the enemy had to retire and fight again after a time under such disadvantageous circumstances that his defeat was patent to the world.

He had suffered a defeat in the first battle. He had given ground and territory he had foolishly taken to be the test of his supremacy. He had lost men and *moral*, and since these are the fundamental materials with which war is waged, this was a more critical loss. But we shall misunderstand the whole atmosphere of this offensive if we regard it merely as an attempt to break through the enemy's lines

and drive him headlong from the field. Such a possibility was certainly present to the minds of the Allied commanders, but it was none the less not the necessary objective of the campaign. Cavalry were concentrated behind the Franco-British lines in order to be let go when the lines should have been broken. And once or twice they were sent forward, with, it must be admitted, disastrous results to them.

The line in front was not a mere superficial skin; it was a series of skins. The first was undoubtedly the most formidable, but there were a second and a third, and there were intermediate positions. What the Allied commanders had arranged was a consistent pressure, a series of blows that should follow rhythmically one upon the other. The enemy was not to be allowed time to recover; he was not to be permitted to make fresh lines behind him. One position after another was to be seized, until the enemy would be forced to undertake under pressure, and under the worst conditions, a withdrawal that he had refused to make at his own time and pace.

It is known that the German Staff had undoubtedly contemplated a withdrawal some time before the offensive opened. Elaborate plans had been drawn up and notices had been issued to the commanders to be ready for marching. But the Staff could never secure sufficient liberty of action to undertake this surer military plan. People in Great Britain, who saw how uneasily the Allied war machine ran, and how great was the friction caused by the intrusion of political aims and the interference of politicians, could not grasp that the enemy machine, with all its superb excellence, was also subject to interference.

The German policy was to act as though you were bound to win, and victory would be assured. The policy of terrorisation would hardly have been undertaken if the Germans had thought they would probably lose. Similarly the population, upon whom ultimately the continuance of the war depended, had to be constantly assured that they were victorious. Victories had to be announced repeatedly in order to complete the illusion. The Battle of Jutland was one of these victories, and its effect was such that all thought of retirement in the West, except under the spur of necessity, had to be abandoned.

So the Somme offensive found the Germans committed to defending extensive lines with a force that could never receive any considerable reinforcement except at the price of a risk or of an actual withdrawal elsewhere. Given the problem—having staked their military reputation upon such an unmilitary plan—the German Staff set themselves to meet the onset with the fullest determination and skill. While the German newspapers were sowing broadcast the fiction that the small advances meant nothing, the generals on the spot were instructing their men in a different key. They were advised to stand at all costs.

Thus General von Below, who commanded the army involved, sent out on the third day of the offensive an order which ran as follows:—

“The decisive issue of the war depends on the victory of the 2nd Army on the Somme. We must win this battle in spite of the enemy's temporary superiority in artillery and infantry. The important ground lost in certain places will be recaptured by our attack after the arrival of reinforcements. The vital thing is to hold on to our present positions at all costs and improve them. I forbid the voluntary evacuation of trenches . . . The enemy should have to carve his way over heaps of corpses . . . I insist that commanding officers devote their utmost energies to the establishment of order behind the front.”

This tells a very different tale from that which the German newspapers were



at pains to issue. And it also throws into correct relief the nature of the struggle. The period of holding out, of preparation, of inferiority, had gone. The time had come to convince the enemy of the fact. He was rushing up all the reinforcements he could gather. He was accumulating guns to reply to the concentration against him. But the offensive was only beginning.

After the first battle, Sir Douglas Haig stated that "it was essential to carry out certain readjustments and relief of the forces engaged. In normal conditions of enemy resistance the amount of progress that can be made at any time without a pause in the general advance is necessarily limited. Apart from the physical exhaustion of the attacking troops and the considerable distances separating the enemy's main systems of defence, special artillery preparation was required before a successful assault could be delivered. Meanwhile, however, local operations were continued in spite of much unfavourable weather."

On Friday, 7th July, the British went forward from two directions against the famous "Cockchafer" division of the Prussian Guard who held Contalmaison, and at midday were in possession of this highly fortified village, and had released a party of Tyneside Scottish who had been cut off on the third day of the offensive. The Guard were severely handled, and left 600 prisoners in British hands; but a counter-attack, organised with skill and energy, drove the 23rd Division out of the village before evening. An enveloping movement on the same day made the position of Ovillers more precarious. But rain had been pouring all day, turning the ground into a morass, and it was difficult to advance against such a handicap.

Yet the fighting went on. Gough had left Ovillers, after the 8th, to yield from necessity. It was cut off, and could not hope to escape capture; and it was against British interests to fight against the concealed machine guns. When it fell, on the 17th, it was found to be garrisoned by only 2 officers and 124 men of the Guard; but their long and bitter resistance shows that the battle was a victory to be proud of. A week before Contalmaison had been taken. The British had held to the southern fringes since their first capture, and on the 10th the 23rd Division had its revenge. The troops forced their way into the north-west and north, and gradually stormed the whole position. This victory over the Prussian Guard was a success of a nature that was hardly grasped at the time.

The Guard are the flower of the German army. Physically, they are men who would be hard to beat or even match anywhere. Their proud tradition of hard service and continuous success received some hard blows in the war, but few to equal that administered by the troops of the British army at Contalmaison. That they were sent there is evidence of the importance assigned to the defence of the position. But they were so badly cut up that an American observer saw train after train secretly discharging the maimed and wounded of these proud troops at their headquarters, Potsdam, amid signs of undisguised depression.

The reinforcements had been sent. By this time regiments from Verdun and Champagne had been represented among the dead and prisoners; but the advance still went on. Some of these proud German soldiers had the ignominy of being marched to the rear of the British lines by a few dishevelled Scots whom the German papers have ever delighted to caricature with long legs running away. The line was being pushed out to the east as well as to the north. Two days before Contalmaison finally fell into the British hands, a lodgment had been effected in Trônes Wood, which afforded so efficient a screen to Guillemont. However well the wood

might now be deluged with shell, it still afforded good cover for the concentration of troops, and the clearing of it occupied almost a complete week. While Contalmaison was at its last gasp, repeated counter-attacks were being made in the wood. One of these succeeded in forcing back the invaders a small distance ; but the task was resumed. By the 12th almost all the wood had been taken, and the same day Mametz Wood, which lay to the east of Contalmaison, was finally cleared, and a number of prisoners and some stores were taken. Mametz Wood, the most extensive in the Somme area, after defying the Welsh Division for several days, had been captured, all but the north-west corner, on the 10th, in an heroic struggle. The quadrangle which united it with Contalmaison had also fallen.

The French had meanwhile continued to improve their position. The German Staff had foolishly announced just before the opening of the offensive that Verdun was about to fall, and that accordingly the French offensive had been prevented. They took full advantage of their opportunities. They were not expected to be able to advance, and the surprise was fatal. The Germans had already moved their local base from Péronne to Chaulnes, and the progress of the French assault proved that this had been necessary. On 9th July Fayolle seized Biaches, and from this point, but a mile from Péronne, their front to Barleux was through the German third line. Before them lay only the river. Péronne was no longer of any value. North of the river, where the Germans had naturally been more on their guard, the French were only through the first line and held points in the second.

It was after the capture of Contalmaison that the British commander issued his first summary of the offensive : " After ten days and nights of continuous fighting, our troops have completed the methodical capture of the whole of the enemy's first system of defence on a front of 14,000 yards. This system of defence consisted of numerous and continuous lines of fire trenches, extending to various depths of from 2,000 to 4,000 yards, and included five strongly fortified villages, numerous heavily wired and entrenched woods, and a large number of immensely strong redoubts. The capture of each of these trenches represented an operation of some importance, and the whole of them are now in our hands."

The second system lay ahead. It stretched from Pozières through Bazentin-le-Petit and Bazentin-le-Grand, Longueval, and Guillemont. The task before the British was not equally distributed over the front. About Contalmaison and Mametz Wood the opposing lines were so close together that, for troops who had the capture of Contalmaison and the defeat of the Prussian Guard behind them, the task was not impossible. But the stretch of the Albert-Ginchy road that went through Bazentin-le-Grand and Longueval lay on rising ground, and was a considerable distance from the British positions.

**The Second Battle.**—Between the approach to Pozières and Delville Wood, which covered Longueval, a distance of some four miles, lay a chain of these fortified centres, each with its protection of woodland. It was on 14th July, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, that the second battle began. The struggle had never been interrupted. Fighting was going on even at that moment. Yet the grand attack on the second line was prepared carefully and systematically. The artillery preparation began to smash the German line to dust. The battering assumed a crescendo in the early hours of the 14th, and the attack was launched.

Some one had noticed the extraordinary fact that all the time the deafening hurricane of the bombardment was in progress birds were singing. When the



terrible roar of the guns died down for a second, the whistle of the birds could be heard, carrying on their blithe songs amidst the scenes of death and destruction. The men were assembled and deployed in the night—a feat which no one would have thought possible with any but long-service and seasoned troops. But the men of the new armies accomplished it without a hitch, and began their advance at 3.25, when figures a few yards away could just be distinguished in the half light. When day broke, dull and hazy, the assault had already made headway. The men went forward with great rapidity—so much so that they left the German barrage behind them.

Three divisions comprised the attacking force—the famous 7th now reconstituted, the 3rd Regular Division, and the 9th Highland Division, which had won fame at Loos; and in the odd fusion of empire men from South Africa fought side by side with Scottish Highlanders who but a year before had been going about their civilian pursuits. It was a task of no little difficulty that lay before the British; yet before this time the second line had been entered. By 7.30 the 2nd Royal Irish held Bazentin-le-Petit; the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers, pushed in between the King's Liverpools and West Yorks, had captured Bazentin-le-Grand an hour before, and Longueval was taken and cleared before evening. Trônes Wood, after a bloody struggle in which the ground changed hands several times, was finally captured by the 6th North Hants and 12th Middlesex. It was in this last operation that a characteristic but none the less romantic incident occurred. In the fierce struggle for the wood, attack had followed counter-attack. On Thursday the Royal West Kents were engaged in the attack, and 100 of them were cut off with machine guns and ammunition. They at once organised a defensive position, and held to it despite assaults by much superior German detachments, until at length they were found and rescued by the general advance on Friday morning. Bazentin-le-Petit changed hands twice before it was finally secured. But the results of the day's assault were very important. One brigade, the 9th (3rd Division), alone captured 36 officers and 650 men, with 4 howitzers, 4 field guns, and 14 machine guns—a very clear testimony to the completeness of the victory and its unexpectedness. Altogether over 2,000 prisoners were taken, and a considerable proportion belonged to the ill-fated Guards.

The assault was pressed on the following day while the captured positions were being cleared and consolidated. The British front was pushed up to the fringes of Pozières, Bazentin-le-Petit Wood was cleared, and the troops even pushed their way north into the German third line at Fourneux or (as it came to be called) High Wood. Between this position and Bazentin-le-Grand corn fields were growing, and in them the Germans were hiding in the evening of the 14th, when a troop of Dragoon Guards and another of Deccan Horse were sent to clear up the ground. When the British saw the cavalry they sent up a great cheer, and the horsemen soon put an end to the Germans in the corn fields. The advance of the cavalry was taken for the symbol of a swifter and more fundamental victory. But the horsemen saw little of the service for which they were trained, and the normal and familiar fighting continued.

Delville Wood, which was completely captured on this day, was not held without severe fighting. It was here that the troops from South Africa \* were in line with

\* General Lukin, their commander, had served with them under Botha in German South-West Africa, and the brigade had taken part in the expedition against the Senussi.



Longueval and Delville Wood.



the Scots, and their success was not made good for five days. Devil's Wood, as some came to call the position, was commanded from higher ground to the north. In the orchards there the Germans concentrated for the repeated counter-attacks which they delivered against the British force, who could be only supplied with food and ammunition with the greatest difficulty. They stood fast against this handicap and against the terrible ordeal of almost continuous shelling. Their ranks grew thinner and thinner; but their spirit did not fail, and they were able to resist an assault that was meant to be final made by three Brandenburg regiments.

Over the main front Sunday, 16th, was given to clearing up and consolidating the positions won. The advanced position in the third line at High Wood was evacuated. It was taken by an improvised assault, and the Allies had found that, in operating against these extraordinary entrenched positions, it was safer to keep to a fixed plan and to hold on to the predetermined objective.

The stubbornness of the German defence did not profit them; but it enhanced the moral value of the Allied success. The enemy had not yet abandoned all idea of recovering lost ground, and under cover of a thick fog detachments crept along the canal west of Péronne and captured the villages of Biaches and La Maissonnette. But a violent counter-attack hurled them back once more with heavy loss.

On the 17th Ovillers surrendered, and the British increased their hold upon the German second line by the capture of Waterlot Farm, a highly fortified position north of Longueval. A summary of the captures in men and material was issued at this time. Five 8-inch and three 6-inch howitzers, four 6-inch guns, 37 field guns, 30 trench mortars, and 66 machine guns had been taken by the British alone; and they held also 189 officers and 10,779 men prisoners. The French about the same time had captured 85 cannon, 100 machine guns, 26 mine throwers, and 235 officers and 12,000 men. The total German losses could hardly have been less and were probably greater than those of the Allies. It is clear that the continuous bombardment, which was directed with remarkable accuracy by the air service, must have caused serious losses. And the Germans chose to make repeated counter-attacks, which equalised their risk. The reckless bravery of the British troops may have made their losses heavier than were necessary, and the abortive attempt to carry the line forward north of the Ancre was a source of numerous casualties.

There can have been no doubt as to the German losses.\* Letters and documents taken from the prisoners and the dead were conclusive on this point. As to the German *moral*, the evidence is less conclusive. That the men's nerve had been broken in some sections is clear; that in others it stood as high as ever seems to be equally established. The German human material seems to have been mixed. If some were as brave as their opponents, others were more abject than any British soldier could have been. It is the testimony of officers and men at the front that never were the British soldiers seen to run forward in the abject panic which characterised some of the Germans. Their hands shot up and down in nervous jerks; they ran or crawled or shambled forward calling out "Kamerad!" and "Mercy!" and offered bribes to the soldiers in whose care they were. Observers of the British were as unanimous as to their mettle. The vast bulk of these soldiers would have known far more of a telescope than of a gun a year before the war. But they fought like heroes. Their officers were boys just out of school or from Oxford, but they went forward in a way that was inspiring. And the first phase of the great offensive

\* See Ludendorff's admission, p. 666.

ended with this second battle, which left the British in possession of over three miles of the second defensive system, the southern crest of the main ridge which formed the basis of the German positions in the Somme area.

### III. THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME: THE SECOND PHASE.

THE first phase had established the British troops on a section of the southern crest of the main plateau, and, in the words of Sir Douglas Haig, they "then entered upon a contest lasting for many weeks, during which the enemy, having found his strongest defences unavailing, and now fully alive to his danger, put forth his utmost efforts to keep his hold on the main ridge. This stage of the battle constituted a prolonged and severe struggle for mastery between the contending armies, in which, although progress was slow and difficult, the confidence of our troops in their ability to win was never shaken. Their tenacity and determination proved more than equal to their task, and by the first week in September they had established a fighting superiority that has left its mark on the enemy, of which the possession of the ridge was merely the visible proof."

These weeks saw the Allies more successful than at any other period of the war, except in the final phase in 1918. Brussiloff continued to win successes in the East: crossed the Stry and entered Brody; captured Stanislaw and reached the Carpathians. The Grand Duke took Baiburt and Erzinghan, and occupied the whole of Armenia. Italy, in an offensive on the Isonzo, captured Gorizia. The Salonika front sprang to life; and then Rumania entered the war and began to invade Hungary. Everywhere at this time the German Alliance was thrown back on the defensive, except in Egypt, where another abortive attack was made on the Suez Canal. It was a time of high hopes when success seemed at length to smile on the Allies.

The British had secured a considerable hold on the main ridge; but the advantage could not be pressed until this hold had been extended. The flanks of the advance had to be cleared. On the left was the tangle of defences knit together by Pozières and Thiepval, and these could be slowly assimilated. But on the right the lines formed a sharp salient at Delville Wood and Longueval, and until the position could be improved the troops could only hold their ground at the price of a heavy drain in all too valuable lives.

Between Pozières and Delville Wood fighting was still in progress on Tuesday, 18th July. Pozières itself, a point in the second German line, and Guillemont had to be taken. The importance of Pozières, or rather of its surroundings, which could not be secured until the village itself had been captured, was that it was the highest point of the ridge in which lay the strongly fortified centre of Thiepval. Indeed, it was almost the highest point over the whole ground to Bapaume.

The advance was not spectacular. It was bad weather. Rain turned the broken ground into something a great deal worse than a ploughed field. Yet small encroachments were made day by day on the desired positions. From Ovillers the front was carried forward. Massing in Trônes Wood, the British made a first attempt to carry Guillemont on the same day (the 19th), but were unsuccessful. On the right flank of the advance the Germans were making furious efforts to recapture the lost second line. Part of Delville Wood and the northern fringes of Longueval were



indeed retaken, and fighting was fast and furious for these positions during the next few days.

But the French now made a magnificent spurt forward. They advanced eastward on the 20th from Hardecourt across the narrow-gauge railway that joins Combles and Cléry, and south of the Somme pushed out their front over a considerable distance. Between Barleux and Vermandovillers the whole of the German front line was taken, and with the positions 2,900 prisoners. During the next few days these positions were firmly established, and small tactical advances were made by both the Allies. The British once more established themselves in High Wood, and a new great advance was prepared.

**Pozières.**—On 23rd July an attack was made from Pozières to Guillemont. The guns had been hurling shell on the positions for two days when the infantry assaulted. Pozières was allotted to Territorial and Australian troops of Gough's army. About midnight the outer works fell, and during the day progress was made in the heap of ruins that had once been a village. The Midland Territorials had a difficult position with the still unreduced Thiepval on their left flank, and their first achievement was to push up a salient between the two centres. The Australians' task was much harder. They were among the flower of the British army. Few, if any, troops at all had their average physique. In seeing them, one wondered that the British could produce such men, for they stood out as extraordinary in stature and build. Of their courage the Dardanelles had spoken. Since that time they had cultivated discipline by repression—a stern lesson, almost the sternest of the war; but none more necessary when a too great individualism might mean death or maiming.

The Australians had to cross a sunken road, lying in advance of a line of entrenchments, before they reached Pozières High Wood. It is among the incredible things of the war that these magnificent soldiers reached the highroad. The struggle was drawn out over the next few days. It was not until Wednesday morning, 26th July, that the village was entirely cleared, and it is impossible to record all the heroic incidents which went to its reduction. The troops crept forward almost hand over hand, and the Midlanders and Australians came together at the northern outskirts of the village. They had there to hold on under a fierce bombardment from the guns, which had still the advantage of observation from the windmill on the summit of the ridge. The behaviour of the Australians under the terrible ordeal was wonderful. High explosives tore great holes in their parapets and buried them; shrapnel sprinkled its deadly trail above them; gas shells sent their horrible odours upon them; curtain fire would cover the whole field of view. But the men took it all with fiercely proud unconcern. They repaired the ruined parapets, crawled out when they were buried in debris, and waited patiently to get at the men behind the guns.

Against these matchless exploits the German reports were impotent. On the day that Pozières fell, they announced with amusing absurdity that Trônes Wood had been attacked, but the assailants had been repulsed. The wood had been in British hands for a fortnight. Fierce fighting had been going on in Delville Wood, but on Thursday, 27th, it and Longueval were finally cleared. The 5th Brandenburg Division, which had held Delville Wood, was finally beaten, and 3 officers with 158 men were taken prisoners. The next few days saw the Australians approach the windmill position above Pozières, and the Allies make a joint advance upon Guillemont. The French made headway between the wood and Moneau Farm, and held their gains against furious counter-attacks.

On 4th August, in hot and heavy weather, the attack on the crest of the ridge, on which stood the windmill, was renewed with complete success. The Australians and 7th Sussex advanced at about nine in the evening, and carried the whole line forward before darkness had set in, on a front of 2,000 yards. The troops had now possession of observation over the area sloping down towards Bapaume. The two following days, though they had witnessed repeated German counter-attacks, were marked by a development of the success. On the 7th a detachment of Australians was captured; but an immediate recoil liberated them. The front was pushed westward little by little towards Thiepval as well as northward, and at the same time Guillemont was being methodically approached from the west and the north. The captures and the advance were not all the fighting nor all the strain by any means. With praiseworthy care, the Germans had made every preparation for all that could happen. The guns behind the front had the exact range of the British positions, and kept them under a continuous fire day and night.

The strain, of course, was worse on the German side. A report by General von Armin, Commander of the 4th Army Corps, was found later, which, taken with the letters found upon captured Germans and the reports in German newspapers, made it clear that the British artillery was imposing an intolerable strain on the enemy. They were compelled to fight largely in improvised positions, and many of their movements seem to have borne the stamp of hasty improvisation. Troops were thrown into a counter-attack with insufficient directions. Relieving troops had at times little knowledge of the real position they were meant to hold. Orders went astray; the telephones were interrupted too frequently for any continuous and careful direction. The men could not be fed or receive water. They were given emergency rations, and had to exist on them until relieved.

They stood their ground well, however, and many were the daring deeds before they could be dislodged. Thiepval, the modern equivalent of a fortress, held out on the left, and Guillemont hedged the British advance on the right. These stubbornly defended forts were of very great importance to the Germans. Thiepval was a pin which held the line to the north *in situ*; Guillemont held the British from giving that effective co-operation to the French on their left which would have lightened the task of their advance.

A concerted movement was made with the French on Guillemont on 30th July; but the morning was foggy, and though the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers and 18th Manchesters got into the western end of the village, they were there cut off, and nearly all were lost. On the northern edge of the village the 17th Royal Fusiliers and 18th Manchesters made progress, but had finally to retire. The French were able to seize the approaches to Maurepas.

On 12th August the French nevertheless went forward again north of the Somme. They were already in possession of the German third line south of the Somme, and they were now endeavouring to keep pace north of the river. Before the end of the day about four square miles of fortified ground had been won. They had bitten deeply into the third line, Maurepas was entered, and Cléry was approached; and 1,000 prisoners had been left in French hands. It was a characteristic piece of French fighting. Fayolle had reduced the preparation and the assault to an almost perfect science. The barrage went ahead of the advancing troops, directed from aeroplanes flying low; and the casualties under such conditions were reduced to the smallest possible limit. The advance of the 12th was developed on the 16th,



when, on a front of about two and a half miles surrounding Maurepas the line was again carried forward.

During these days the British front was never at rest. It was being pushed out towards Thiepval, north towards Martinpuich, east into Guillemont and above it. On Friday, 18th, the British and French attacked together once more. One of the bastions of Thiepval was carried in a rush. The force which assaulted the work was little more than a battalion, but it accounted for about double the number of Germans. Leipzig Redoubt was garrisoned by Prussians, and the work was so strong that it was natural they should flatter themselves as to their safety. But after a sharp and short bombardment it was taken in a little time, and was consolidated before the inevitable counter-attacks. All along the front the lines were advanced. The troops succeeded in capturing Guillemont station and the outskirts of the village, and the French went forward into Maurepas and to the south, where the Prussian Guard, newly arrived, were stationed.

The British positions were now facing the third line. In the centre, indeed, that was the objective. On the east and west the two positions of Thiepval and Guillemont still held the German defence from an extended line of attack. Guillemont was almost enveloped. Thiepval was closely observed from the new British positions; yet the Germans fought till hope remained no longer. German counter-attacks were repeated against the British positions without substantially changing them. Momentary successes were immediately counteracted. Indeed, it seems strange that the Germans had not yet taken the measure of the energy and will behind the offensive. Yet they seem to have clung to the superficial resemblances between the Picardy situation and that of Verdun. Their aim, they said, was to make the Allies pay the maximum price for each advance. They professed to know that they could prevent the Allies from making a breach in the lines or achieving any critical success. But they had not grasped, as the Allies had, the cost it might imply; and their ability to pay it was the one element that clearly differentiated the cases.

On 21st August the British had pushed their lines to within 1,000 yards of Thiepval, which lay in a constantly sharpening salient. Three days later the distance had been halved, and the French had cleared Maurepas. The following days were filled with the familiar counter-attacks and small advances. On 26th August a counter-attack of the Prussian Guard south of Thiepval was smashed before it could get completely under way.

**Guillemont.**—A great Allied advance took place on 3rd September, when the third pitched battle was fought. For two days the guns prepared the way for a deliberate attempt to carry the positions which had been approached step by step since the previous leap forward on 14th July. In this battle, as in every other prepared battle of the war, the original impetus was not spent for some days. The British attack, which began at noon, extended over the whole front as far north as the Ancre. In little over an hour the Connaughts, Leinsters, and Royal Irish had overrun Guillemont; and even Ginchy was entered, though not retained. Gough's army made slight progress, but the French swept past Maurepas to Le Forest and Cléry, each of which was captured by the 1st Corps. These positions were east of Combles, and the French pushed their line northwards until it touched the southern outskirts of this important town. With the fall of Guillemont to the Irish troops, the last point in the second German line was taken between Mouquet

Farm, east of Thiepval, and the French lines. That, indeed, was the chief gain of the advance, since it cemented the junction between the Allies.

Counter-attacks followed on the next day, but were beaten off, and the British went forward again east of Guillemont into Leuze Wood. The British continued to press on, and soon got to within 1,000 yards of Combles. The distracted German command, which witnessed the closing in of the Allies upon Combles and Thiepval, witnessed another unexpected blow that afternoon. From Vermandovillers to Chilly the first German line fell immediately. The three miles' advance yielded 3,000 prisoners and introduced a new French army (General Micheler's 10th) to the Somme struggle. The breach was being widened, and on the following day the front was pushed out still farther. By the capture of Romiette Wood and part of Marrières Wood, Fayolle's troops at the same time approached the Bapaume-Péronne road.

Three days later (9th) the Leinster, Munster, and Connaught regiments, which had taken Guillemont, captured Ginchy after a fierce struggle with the Bavarians and Pomeranians who held it. The sequence of events in those days was characteristic of the whole offensive. Since 6th September the Germans had been making furious counter-attacks over the whole front from Thiepval in the north to Chilly in the south. Time after time during the next two days massed attacks had been made over the thirty-mile front. Generally they were caught before they reached the Allied lines, and were smashed by artillery. Sometimes they were even disturbed when concentrating by the Allies' guns or aeroplanes. And when the impetus of these ineffectual attacks had spent itself and the torn ranks were withdrawn to reform, the Allies resumed.

The moral effect of this sequence must have been great. What is the use of a counter-attack if it does not regain lost ground and fails even to arrest the advance? The counter-attack is a means of defence; but in its methods it is an attack, and risks being punished as such. It may be thought that, at any rate, the enemy was but equalising his losses with those of the Allies. Such an inference does not take into account the fact that the Allied soldiers were cool and confident, and German commanders were crying out against the nervous firing of their men. And even if the losses were equal, they were not so relatively to the resources at the back of the lines. The only advantage the Germans gained was time, and they may have had the hope of discouraging the Allies from continuing their offensive. The time factor was certainly of critical importance, since every check shortened the season favourable for major operations.

With the fall of Ginchy the second phase of the Somme offensive may be said to be complete. The first and second defensive lines had been breached. They were lines only in name. In effect, they were systems of intricate works, strengthened by every means the Germans could devise, made as formidable an obstacle as any soldier could wish. They had been finally stormed, and thousands of prisoners had been taken. The French had marched to the doors of Péronne, and this advance had forced the Germans to use Chaumes as an advanced local base. Then they had advanced to within half a mile of that centre. They had even cut it off from direct communication with the south. Combles was invested. All these different gains added to the cumulative strain on the German positions in the West. Forced to use roundabout railways, they were bound to maintain a denser distribution over all the threatened front. They were compelled to exact from their men an





The Allied Front on September 10th. The thick dotted lines show the approximate positions of the second and third German systems.

endurance that was almost impossible. Emergency rations were doled out, and with these the men had to hold out till relieved. At times their thirst became so unbearable that they would drink from pools in which lay decomposing corpses.

That they held out at all is tribute to the German discipline; but the strain was beginning to tell \* even upon this extraordinary military machine. We have noted the evidences of demoralisation that spasmodically appeared in the ranks. But the struggle was still to go on. There was no rest night or day. And as depression began to eat into the German *moral*, the soldiers of the Allied armies grew more and more confident and bold.

#### IV. THE RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE: THE SECOND PHASE.

WHILE the hammer blows were resounding on the Somme, the Russian offensive was taking on a new lease of life in the East, and it is necessary to bear closely in mind some standard by which these operations can be gauged. We have seen that the decision must come on the Western front, and if we have appreciated the reason for that state of things, we shall have grasped the first elements of the war perspective. The methodical and slow reduction of the last of Germany's colonies—East Africa—that was proceeding at this time is chiefly notable as giving more material for barter. If a military decision should prove too expensive for the Allies, this always remained as a substantial counterbalance to the enemy's territorial gains in Europe.

Similarly the victories in Armenia against Turkey and the repulse of Turkey's attack on Egypt were blows aimed at the outer fringe of the lines that invested the Central Empires. The rôle of Bulgaria and Turkey in the German plan was to hold the Allies off her. Germany was the chief, in a sense the only enemy.

The territory occupied matters nothing if the force to hold it is not at hand. Russia, in striking at Austria, was thus not so much concerned with recovering Galicia, or even with driving the enemy from Poland. If Germany were vanquished, all the rest would follow. Similarly, in the Somme offensive the ground won was a comparatively subsidiary matter as compared with the losses inflicted upon Germany and the vast and increasing calls made upon her for more and more troops. It is in this light we must regard the Russian offensive. Germany alone made a point of the war map and the foreign territory she held, and it is from this fact that the recovery or capture of territory achieved its importance. It was a symbol, the symbol of Germany's impotence to hold it. When the Somme offensive began, Major Moraht, the famous German military critic, was making the dangerous admission that the main German armies were at hand to withstand it. Remembering this, and that the Germans regarded their lines as impregnable, we have one reason for the insistence on small advances.

Yet, again, the war on the Russian front was a looser sort of warfare than on the West. Entrench as they might, the enemy could not create quite so strong a system when the ground had not the extraordinary nuclei of defence which the multitudinous villages and peaceful hamlets constituted in France and Belgium. The Austrian defences were as strong as they could be made; but as we have seen,

\* "September was an especially critical month." [Ludendorff, *My Memories*, p. 276.]



the bulk of the heavy guns had been taken away, and with their removal the Austrian barrage became weaker and the Russian fire heavier, since there was obviously less counter-battery work.

All this does not depreciate the work of Russia ; but it gives their achievement a slightly different orientation. The territorial changes mattered still less on the Eastern front, and the main factor which Russia was contributing to the war was the more and more complete elimination of Austria-Hungary. It was a far better thing for the Allies that the enemy conceived himself pledged to defend Kovel and Lemberg, for he could be made to pay every day his price for the privilege.

The second phase of the Russian offensive, therefore, was unlike the first in this, that Germany was compelled to come to the rescue of her stricken ally, and the small territorial gains—small, that is to say, as compared with those of the first phase—were won against a constant and growing German resistance. That they were made at all when Russia had so little of the material which alone can cope economically with the German methods of massed heavy artillery is at once tribute to a rare versatility of leadership and a wonderful heroism of the Russian troops. Brussiloff used all his advantages to the full, and if he could not achieve more, it was because the Germans had turned warfare from a supporting of troops by artillery to a supporting of artillery by troops. Flesh and blood and skill can do much ; but unless heavy guns are put out of action the losses will in the end decide the day.

The end of the first phase of the Russian offensive left the enemies' line bulged out past Lutsk and west of Bukovina. Why, it may be asked, did the Austrian centre about Tarnopol still hold in the face of a dangerous flank threat from north and south ? Why not recognise the inevitable and fall back ? The answer to this is twofold. In the first place, the far eastern position of the line was Germany's signal post of victorious force ; and in the second, it was the shortest possible line that could be held. Any retreat westward would uncover the Carpathians and leave that ridge to be held strongly, or offer Russia an uncovered flank. The shrinkage of Germany's forces made it imperative for her to hold as short a line as possible compatible with her ambitious claims.

Once a retreat began, who could tell where it would end ? Hence Bothmer's army, standing for the most part on the ground it had occupied all winter, was a clear sign to the careful observer that the enemy had not abandoned the hope of recovering the old line. While he stood there he helped to make the Russian line about Lutsk a salient, and salients are easy to attack and difficult to hold. The blood-drenched salient of Ypres will stand in history as a monument to the stubborn British pride that preferred death and wounds to the admission that a withdrawal might be taken to imply.

The second phase of the Russian offensive was the settlement of the problem as to how the salient about Lutsk was to be flattened out. Would it be extended to stability or flattened to impotence ? And the question from another angle was : Would Bothmer or Brussiloff retreat ? The German Staff had to make very certain of one thing before they could even contemplate the retreat of Bothmer. To the north of the Lutsk salient lay Kovel, and this was the link between the armies north and south of the Pripet. Unless Kovel could be so strengthened as to hold the conformation of the line south of it, the Germans were faced with the question of a retreat over the whole of their Eastern front. This second phase of the Russian

offensive witnessed a fierce struggle for Kovel and its ultimate buttressing by a huge accumulation of guns.

The offensive was resumed with a new assault upon the Kovel sector and a development of Lechitsky's flank attack in Southern Galicia. But though the first achieved immediate results of the utmost importance, and the second secured points which considerably weakened Bothmer's centre, the most interesting and important operations, both tactically and strategically, were those by which Sakharoff *compelled* Bothmer's retreat. This was the effect of the second phase of the offensive; but it was not the most important result. The reduction of the Austro-Hungarian armies which had held up the line for so long was the most valuable result, since it laid not only the main but almost the whole burden of the war upon Germany.

The new attack upon Kovel introduced to the world a commander whose swift successes made his name a rival to those of Kaledin, Sakharoff, and Lechitsky. General Lesch, who sprang the unpleasant surprise on the German Staff, was up to the beginning of June the commander of the 3rd Army in the group of Evert. It was he who had held the Austrians and Germans off the Lublin-Cholm line in 1915 until the Warsaw armies could retreat in safety. His army stood north of Pinsk; but while the June offensive was in progress, the whole of it was carefully and secretly transferred across the marshes to ease off the strain on Kaledin's army. It took over the Russian line on the lower Styra.

In this area lay a promising country for major operations. The Kovel-Sarny-Kiev railway line runs through a flat sandy plain which was organised in continuous defensive lines; but it was too wet and too flat to afford adequate observation or perfect entrenchments. A few miles north of the line the ground was worse. Marsh and swamp for the bulk of the year, it could not be entrenched continuously. Its strength lay chiefly in its impassability. Where the ground lifted a little from the surrounding marsh, ingenious forts were built with outer lines formed of cunning obstacles. Barbed wire and nets were even sunk in the swamp; and the centres were connected by telephone lines. Behind lay the usual network of light railways. Yet the intricate improvisations of the German Staff could not prevent the Russian peasantry of the district crossing and recrossing the line at will. Some of these men, who usually wage a precarious battle for existence with the forces of the wild, made their way repeatedly to the German positions, gathering information which was at once conveyed to the Russian Staff. Daring raids such as that which carried a Russian patrol to the local German headquarters without warning were the result. The Germans were killed or captured, and the Russians fell back to their lines, leaving the German line disorganised and seriously disturbed. Some of the peasants formed small guerrilla bands who plied a warfare of the ancient sort in the marshes. They knew every causeway, and were able to disappear as though into the bowels of the swamp.

Lesch's army trekked southwards in the dry June weather, which was transforming a region generally impassable for the treachery of the ground into one perilous from disease. Shallow pools were drying up, and the air was filled with the stench of rotteness and decay. All the insects which frequent such hotbeds of disease were multiplying a thousandfold and batten on the debris of the last season's battles. The fire belt across the Kovel-Sarny railway was held by Bavarians and Poles, who fought with heroic stubbornness, but were unable to hold up the whole line, which was cut into swathes by the Russian bombardment. The sandy front they were



defending became a dense cloud of dust under the storm of shells, and the artillery could not mark efficiently under such conditions.

Already at the beginning of July the Germans had begun that accumulation of force which was designed to stay the flood that threatened to overwhelm Kovel. But the Russians struck too soon for the enemy. It was about 4th July that the Russian infantry got in motion astride the Kovel-Sarny railway. Their object was plain. The Lutzk salient was the prize. Its long front facing north-west stretched back towards Kolki on the Styr. If it were to be held, it must be by straightening the salient out westwards, and the first Russian blow to achieve this was delivered from the northern flank. Though the line was an aggregation of fortified posts not far north of the railway, little could be done by frontal attack, since the causeways could be so efficiently commanded by the German fortified centres. The main leverage must come from the firmer ground which lay astride the great railway artery.

On the first day of the attack a fierce battle at Kolki gave the Russians over a thousand prisoners and considerable material. The advance was small, but the capture of material proves that it was significant. Three lines of barbed wire had to be cut through, and perilous land mines had to be crossed. But the Styr barrier had been passed at this point, as it was farther to the north. The operations were in the nature of a pair of pincers. The enemy line reached eastward to the river crossing at Tchartorysk, which was the centre of an almost continuous struggle for months in the preceding autumn. The progress of the battle extended the Russian grip on the west bank of the river. From north and south the advance closed in upon the advanced German centre.

With great rapidity the ground was cleared. North-west of Kolki the marshy ground could not prevent the Russians forcing their way northward to the Kovel railway line. And the column operating north of the railway struck southward at the same time, getting on to the rear of the enemy and enlarging continually their captures of men and material. Cavalry were soon in operation to the north, and with a sudden sweep they struck at and captured the Manievitche station, some fifteen miles west of the Russian line at the opening of the battle. The northern and southern columns joined hands on 7th July, and a half of the rectangle between the Styr and the Stokhod had been cleared. The struggle across the marshes had gone on simultaneously with that to the south, and the road from Novo Tcherevischche to Kolki via Manievitche, a sort of rough diagonal of the rectangle, was completely in Russian hands.

During these three days the Russians had captured at least 300 officers and 12,000 unwounded men, 45 light and heavy guns, 45 machine guns, and a large quantity of shells, cartridges, arms, supplies, and forage. The enemy salient had been smashed in, and, as the German report put it, "owing to superior pressure, a shorter defensive line was chosen." "The troops were ordered to withdraw their first line," ran the Vienna version, and "the movement was carried out without any disturbance on the part of the enemy." Remembering the list of captures given above, it seems apposite to wonder what a "disturbance" might have been expected to accomplish. Certainly drastic readjustments had been made in the German dispositions, for the Russians still continued their advance westward. Kaledin's army recovered its impetus with Lesch's advance, retrieved the ground it had lost under the fierce German counter-attacks, and by 8th July the Stokhod line below the Kovel-Sarny railway was in their hands. At the village of Ugly the river reaches

its farthest point east in a narrow angular point. The Russians, holding the river line to the north and south, set about the capture of the apex of the triangle at this point. They crossed the river at Ugly in the most heroic manner. The bridge was in flames, and yet Colonel Kantseroff crossed it at the head of his regiment, and seized the west bank. This success was followed up promptly by an extension of the Russian holding across the river.

Yet, though established west of the Stokhod in the river angle, the line of the river was too important to be yielded without more bitter fighting. The army of General Lesch had advanced to within about twenty miles of Kovel, covering in three days some twenty-five miles. Further advance meant the jeopardising of Kovel, the link between the northern (formerly the German) sector of the Eastern front and the southern (formerly the Austrian) sector; and the German concentration of men and guns had now reached a head. The fiercest battle of all the fighting in the offensive up to now developed for the defence of the line of the Stokhod. The river was indeed the last natural barrier in the advance upon Kovel. If it could be crossed on an extensive front, Kovel would become almost untenable. Numerous positions which in former wars would have been thought impossible to hold had actually been held during the war. The amazing position of Ypres with its deadly salient, and St. Mihiel with its thin precarious finger on the Meuse, had remained little changed during a whole year. But without forces, which at this period could not be afforded by the enemy, a place like Kovel could not have been held without natural barriers.

The Stokhod battle, therefore, decided the fate of Kovel for the present. As a river barrier it was not significant. It is a narrow stream, but it draws a considerable strength from its marshy borders. The western side is slightly higher, and looks down on the sedges and reeds through which the stream winds. Desperate energy had been given to strengthening its natural features during the month of June. Intricate entrenchments had been built by forced labour. Miles of barbed wire were used to form obstacles, and beyond the numerous consecutive lines of trenches emplacements were made for the heavy guns for the defence of Kovel. Even on the Western front the barrage of the heavy guns was not completely in control up to September; and in Russia there was no comparison between the resources of the combatants in this respect. Over the Stokhod area there were said to be assembled, when the battle broke out, about a hundred heavy guns and almost double the number of lighter calibre. The characteristic features of the German defence were all complete, even to the gathering of picked troops.

The Germans undoubtedly expected a decisive battle in this region, and the Russians fostered the idea by their reports. "In the event of the fall of Kovel," ran one Russian *communiqué*, "fresh important perspectives will open out for us," and "on the issue of these battles undoubtedly depends not only the fate of Kovel . . . but also, to a very considerable degree, all the present operations on our front." In issuing such a report, the Russian Staff were intentionally throwing dust in the eyes of the Germans and encouraging them to believe their chief objective to be Kovel. In point of fact the whole line was open to them to attack. Germany had to defend everywhere, whereas a decisive breach anywhere was sufficient for the Russians. Moreover, at the moment the report was made, Sakharoff's army was about to enlarge the Lutsk salient southwards.

Clearly, the capture of Kovel meant much to Russia, and on the Stokhod were gathered famous Siberian and Turkestan divisions. The battle which developed in



the second week of July raged over the central area of the recent advance. The nature of the fighting, with the new fortifications and the vast accumulation of guns, fell back to the positional battle in which yards are bought by thousands of lives. The thunder of the guns filled the air with its continual reverberation. The casualties on both sides were very great, and such was the German pressure that the Russians devoted themselves almost wholly to defence and withdrew exposed positions across the river.

But while this battle was raging and the Russian headway seemed blocked, Brussiloff, with a rare versatility, was quietly maturing a blow in another quarter. The battering-ram which the Germans had formed about Kovel was not the whole of their plan for turning the tables on the Russians. They had already attempted, though unsuccessfully, to push in the northern front of the Lutzk salient. An attempt was now to be made to drive in the southern face of the salient. Its chances of success were higher than those of the northern struggle. The battle front here would lie much nearer the highly organised railway system of Eastern Galicia. An offensive supported by the numerous roads and railways radiating from the Lemberg sector of Galicia would start under a tremendous advantage, not only absolutely, but far more relatively to the poorer communications of the Russian command.

The Russian Intelligence, informed of what was afoot, realised its importance at once, and resolved to deal with it in the best way possible. What they stood little chance of combating when matured they could defeat when only half developed. They determined to anticipate the enemy blow by striking before the concentration was complete. The Germans proposed to throw into this area some 400,000 men—a force the Russians could not so rapidly accumulate, or accumulated, manœuvre. The enemy troops had been rapidly gathered from all quarters of the European battlefield. Two Austrian divisions had been withdrawn from the Trentino, one German division had been taken from Verdun and another from the Dvinsk front; so true was it that at this point nothing could happen on any one point of the front without having its effect upon every other.

Nearly three days from the date arranged for launching the German counter-offensive, General Sakharoff's troops struck with the prime motive of deranging the enemy plans. On 15th July, while bitter fighting was raging on the Stokhod line, an engagement opened at Svidniki, the extreme right of the line upon which Sakharoff meant to operate, and developing favourably, the bombardment was extended as far to the south-east as Radzivilov. For several hours the Russian guns poured their hail on to the enemy line, which at the moment held hardly half the number of troops destined for the German counterstroke. It was not the overpowering shelling which the Western front had grown accustomed to, but it was a carefully ranged bombardment of the improvised trenches made by the enemy to prevent an extension of the Russian advance. Shrapnel fell into and about the trenches. High explosives battered them to dust and disturbed troops behind in their billets. Then later on, without any intermission, the guns began to cut avenues in the wire barriers. The avenues were about the extent of a cricket pitch, and there were some five or six cut for each division.

By midnight of 15th July the barriers were breached and all was ready, and in the half light of approaching dawn the men crossed the river near the extreme end of the right flank and seized the Austrian positions at Szklin and Ugrinov. Holding their rifles above their heads, the troops went through the water, which reached up

to their necks in places, and advanced in a southerly direction. The region they were operating in had this strength, that it was crossed and intersected by streams in almost every direction. Each of the river beds had its margin of marshy ground which further accentuated the difficulty of the advance, and to some extent conditioned the tactics of the battle. From Svidniki the Russians had struck westwards; from Szklin and Ugrinov they deployed towards the south; and where the Lipa empties itself into the Styr they struck again towards the west.

The southerly blow carried the troops seven miles against the resistance of the two Austrian divisions which had been withdrawn from the Trentino. About the mouth of the Lipa the attack was so successful and the aim of the assault so sure that an enormous capture of material resulted. Almost every yard of ground yielded its store of the material which was to have been used against the Russians. Hundreds of thousands of shells and cartridges were seized, thousands of grenades, even bands and field kitchens. There were many almost new guns taken, some of them of heavier calibre than any on the Russian side. The retreat between Szklin and the Styr was towards the east, but from the direction of the Russian attacks parts of the enemy forces retired in disorder to avoid envelopment, and the day yielded over 12,000 prisoners. The Germans recently brought from Dvinsk, who attempted to stay the retreat by a prompt counter-attack, shared in the heavy casualties inflicted by the pursuing Russians, and suffered without improving the position. As a result of the first operations the enemy front was pressed out in a loose curve behind the Lipa—"without being disturbed by the enemy," as the Vienna report again stupidly set forth. It had begun to rain as the Russians struck on the morning of the 16th, and in the next few days the rain developed into a downpour which threatened to check all movement. This region of streams, rivers, lakes, and marshes became an area of clinging swampy ground, offering every handicap to advance and every advantage to immobility. Yet the German counterstroke had been thrown into disorder, and Sakharoff's first end was achieved.

A pause for reorganisation and to give the weather a chance to improve, and the Russians were again in motion. The first blow had been of the nature of an offensive-defensive. The second was more ambitious. It was a development of the main Russian offensive plan. The Austrians had taken up the line of the Lipa to the Styr, and Sakharoff now set about forcing this obstacle in the same way that he had broken their defensive between Szklin and the Styr. A fierce blow was aimed across the Lipa to the south, and another across the Styr from Verben towards the west. In the angle of the rivers the enemy fought under the disadvantage of having to retreat on converging lines, so that those falling back from the Lipa would hamper the defenders of the Styr in their retirement.

On 20th July the Lipa was crossed with the heroism that had before marked the Russian attack, and after overcoming the resistance east of the Styr that obstacle was also passed and the town of Berestechko, on the western bank, was entered. It was in the battle in the hills which cradle this town that Colonel Tataroff, mortally wounded, shouted his men on to the charge with his last breath. Berestechko is but two miles from the Galician frontier, and by 21st July the Russians were astride of the Styr, on the Galician borders, with another 12,000 prisoners in their hands. The second battle had given the Russians a great tactical platform which they were not slow to utilise. They were now not far from Brody, and were in a position to strike southwards against the Lemberg-Krasne-Tarnopol line, which was the main



stay, because the main way of supply or escape of General Bothmer's army. Sakharoff's troops again took a breathing pause before the main assault. The next immediate objective of the Russian attack was Brody; and that the imminence of its danger was realised is to be seen from the fact that already the evacuation was being carried out. It is a great road centre and an important station on the Rovno-Lemberg line, and it had been an advanced hospital centre and the headquarters of General Bœhm Ermolli. In a few days it became almost deserted, and under the concussion of the guns it began to shake and fall, until all its windows were knocked out.

Brody was defended by a natural line stretched from north-west to south-east for about twenty miles. The Slonovska, a tributary of the Styr, covers some twelve miles, and wooded hills stood sentinel in front of the town some eight miles farther. The river had the usual framework of marsh, which at its mouth became almost impassable. By the evening of 24th July all was ready for the attack, and the bombardment began. About an hour before dawn next morning the battle opened with three assaulting columns attempting to break through the centre and flanks. One near Loshinoff had laid in the night a causeway of wood and stones across the marshy borders of the stream, and after crossing with little difficulty attempted to make their way south, astride the road to Brody which runs through the forest. They achieved some immediate success, and cleared the bulk of the forest; but were unable to advance farther, owing to the hills which crossed the road to the south-east.

The struggle in the centre, which was in effect the battle for Brody, developed into bitter fighting for the fortified village of Opariptse. It lay on the left centre, and was covered to the north by a wide marshy area. To the south—that is to say, on its left—it was strengthened by the difficult flank of the Brody position. Heavy Austrian batteries on the hill 354 (Makubra) had prevented the Russians from developing their assault after the stream barrier had been crossed. Opariptse, in effect, was the one avenue of approach for the left and centre; and, a narrow causeway at best, it had been fortified with extreme care. As the key to the whole position it was defended with desperate energy. Five consecutive attacks were made before any result could be achieved. One or two melted away before the fierce enemy fire. One or two gained a foothold, only to be driven back by the prompt and violent counter-attacks.

It must have seemed as if the attack would have to be abandoned or another way found to turn the position. But the sixth assault went through the long village street, and Opariptse was Russian. Yet here the assailants found their advance stemmed by a deadly fire from the low hills west of the village. A frontal attack meant the terrible repeated assault of the village over again. But the attack of the right flank was maturing, and on the second day of the battle the line had been driven in to a distance of four miles north of the town. It was not till late afternoon of the 27th that the Russians attacking the northern end of the hills took Klekotoff, and even then they would not have been secure but that the troops operating on their right had forced their way through the woods of Volanik and turned the line of the hills. Installed in the rear of this barrier, they forced the retreat on Brody; and the left column having got through the woods below Opariptse, they joined hands, and after a night of hard fighting entered the town an hour after sunrise.

Mr. Stanley Washburn, whose dispatches in the *Times* formed the best Russian war news, stated that up to this moment General Sakharoff's offensive had pro-

ceeded according to schedule, and Brody was "taken within twenty-four hours of the exact time planned by the general when he began the movement two weeks ago." In the few days of fighting for the town he had secured about 14,000 officers and men prisoners. The whole achievement was remarkable. The Lutzk salient was safe from attack from the south. Later developments sealed Bothmer's fate; but for the moment the success was sufficiently pronounced to enable Generals Lesch and Kaledin to develop their Stokhod battle with equanimity. The enemy was sufficiently embarrassed in the Brody sector to require all the troops he could spare; and the Kovel sector could be developed, not only with some assurance of success, but also with the reasonable hope of raising a diversion which might assist Generals Sakharoff and Tcherbatcheff in their more massive manœuvring against Bothmer's front.

Brody was, as we have seen, really doomed when General Sakharoff crossed the Lipa and advanced on the Galician border on 22nd July. The armies of Generals Lesch and Kaledin must then have been putting the final touches to their preparations for a further advance. Following the order of General Sakharoff's advance, the first blow was struck in a direction where the main blow was not meant to fall. On 27th July, the first line of the enemy was broken through west of Lutzk, and 9,000 prisoners with a number of guns were captured. It was just after noon of the following day when the attack on the Stokhod opened. Within an hour the defences had been breached so completely that thirty-eight guns had been taken. Guns stand some miles behind the front, and heavy guns far back. Where the Kovel-Sarny railway crosses the Stokhod the Russians advanced to the western side and occupied a strong position. But farther south, towards Ozeniany, the greatest success had been achieved, the Russians penetrating nearer to Kovel there than anywhere. And in the last days of July the advance was extended and consolidated against a terribly bitter resistance. Heavy losses were inflicted upon the German and Hungarian regiments, and these were, in the end, a finer victory than the mere capture of a strategic centre.

Between Stobychva in the north and Kieselín to the south-west the battle raged, and the fighting was caught up into the struggle on 3rd August for Rudka Mirynska, a small village on the Stavok. In the early afternoon the Russians had passed the village on the north, and had reached the Miryn-Stobychva road. The village was taken at the point of the bayonet by Turkestan troops; but it was counter-attacked with great vigour by Bavarians, Poles, and Austrians, who, ably directed by General von Furth, compelled the retirement of the Russians to about a third of a mile to the east. But with this success the enemy had to be content. The Stokhod line had been taken from him, and in the angle of the river the Russians were installed to a depth of several miles, and the struggle reached the equilibrium which in modern battles is the only stability—an equilibrium of forces. The Russians were not supported by natural positions, and the Germans had put a term to their advance without the assistance of natural positions. It was, as we have said, an equilibrium of forces which was accepted by both sides.

Meanwhile the fate of the Lutzk salient wanted a final chapter. The line had been straightened out to the west, and thus was the question settled to the disadvantage of the enemy. But one further readjustment was necessary before the salient could be considered as completely redeemed from all risk. Bothmer was still holding his centre, and this meant that all hope was not yet abandoned



by the enemy. To use a favourite expression of the Germans, "the victory was not recognised." The recognition was forced upon the Germans by Generals Sakharoff and Lechitsky.

After the fall of Brody, General Sakharoff's army was left with its front facing the main artery which served Bothmer's army. The distance at which his troops had come to rest ranged from ten to twelve miles. It was bad country for an advance; but, as we have seen, the Russians had grown accustomed to operating in roadless, marshy ground, and General Sakharoff had shown a great power of getting round obstacles he could not cross. From Brody there is one good road leading to Zlochov, and another which throws a rough encircling arm round the ridge which conditions the courses of so many of the great eastern rivers. Apart from these roads, there were only the marshy river valleys stretching between the Russians and the avenue they had to interrupt if they wished to force a retreat on Bothmer.

General Sakharoff, profiting by the past failures to strike across the barrier formed by the river lines, determined to strike along them. No defence seems to have been matured against so novel a plan; and when the troops struck along the little stream Grabenka, on 4th August, they took the enemy by surprise, and by the following evening the whole string of villages south of the Sereth had fallen. Under cover of this diversion, a new attack from Zalotse was successful, and the Russians were in motion against the main railway and striking at right angles to it. On 6th August the Russians continued to clear the area in the triangle formed by the railway and the Sereth. By the 10th they were less than four miles from the line at Nesterovse, and the long-awaited hour had struck. The railway line was under Russian guns, and evacuation already would be impeded on this flank.

General Lechitsky put the finishing touches to the plight of Bothmer's army. At the beginning of July the enemy was standing on a line centring in Tlumach. Bothmer's army, which assimilated the remnants of Pflanzer's defeated troops, had been strongly reinforced; and since strategically its fate was linked with that of the Dniester barrier, he was charged with the defence of the river crossing. Bothmer attempted a counter-attack on 2nd July, and forced Lechitsky to withdraw slightly; but his position was not even tactically improved. He had merely stayed the Russian onset for a moment. The Russians adopted their now recognised procedure. Held in one direction, they struck in another. On 4th July they cut the Delatyn railway into Hungary, and thus severed the main southern artery of Eastern Galicia.

Four days later Delatyn was captured, and the rains fell. In a fortnight Lechitsky had taken 674 officers and 30,875 men. Almost a month later the weather again became favourable, and Lechitsky resumed his advance. On 7th August he retook Tlumach, and pushed his right flank to the Dniester at Nizhinov, and Tcherbatcheff moved forward north of the river. The next two days saw the march of the right centre upon Stanislau, which was entered on the 10th as Tcherbatcheff crossed the Zlota Lipa. At this stage Bothmer, after a resistance which was one of the most steadfast and brilliant in the war, was compelled to fall back. Sakharoff had his northern communications under fire; Lechitsky had cut those to the south. The German general recognised the inevitable, and withdrew behind the Zlota Lipa, establishing his left in front of Halicz, his centre at Brzezany, and his right at Zborov.

This set a natural term to Brussiloff's offensive; but the Russians had to

continue the struggle because of events which were shaping on their left flank. Bothmer's retreat was complete on the 20th; but it was nearly ten days before Tcherbatcheff was ready to attack the new positions. Meanwhile Letchitsky found himself facing the Austrian armies of Kövess von Kövesshaza (3rd) and General von Kuchbach (7th) on the Carpathians. On the 15th August, striking down from Delatyn, he captured the heights covering the Jablonica Pass, through which the railway runs into Hungary. Two days later he captured the Kirlibaba Pass and part of Mount Kapul, which dominates it from the north. But this mountain fighting moved in a slower rhythm, and the Russian forces and ammunition were wasted so much that the southern armies gathered themselves together for a sterner attack towards the end of the month, when it had been arranged that Rumania was to join in the war on the side of the Allies.

The Russian offensive in three months had captured nearly 400,000 prisoners, and must have put a total of nearly a million men *hors de combat*. Germany had been compelled to send some thirty divisions to this area, no fewer than fifteen from the Western front. Austria had to recall seven from Italy, and two Turkish divisions were brought north. These results speak for themselves, and it was in the flush of these successes that Rumania at length entered the war, overlooking the fact that the Russians were almost exhausted by their superhuman efforts.

## V. RUMANIA INTERVENES.

ON 27th August Rumania declared war upon Austria-Hungary, and on the following day Germany declared war upon Rumania. A new situation arose with these events. Rumania had certain national aspirations which could only be satisfied by taking from Austria-Hungary a large strip of her territory, and her adherence to the Triple Alliance was as unnatural as that of Italy. She had no necessary enmity towards Germany; but as Austria-Hungary was now reduced to a state of extreme necessity, it was upon Germany would chiefly devolve any operations to deliver her weaker partner from the new enemy. Germany could only forsake Austria-Hungary under pain of complete and decisive defeat in the near future. She could neither abandon the Dual Monarchy nor permit it to collapse, since in either case the Russian, Rumanian, and Italian armies would be free to concentrate against Germany alone, and would have a new way of approach.

Germany had therefore to declare war. It was not the same with Bulgaria. Rumania was a real democracy. The Rumanians clung to their Latin traditions, and looked to Italy and France as their nearest spiritual allies. With such a temper they did not wish to cross swords with Bulgaria. The neighbouring Balkan states would have to live together when the war had run its course, and Rumania did not wish to embitter the situation by a blow which might be regarded as another stab in the back. Part of the Dobrudja province had been ceded to her by Bulgaria in 1913, under compulsion; but Rumania's aspirations did not look to the south for an extension of her empire, and accordingly it was hoped that there at least there need be no fighting.

Bulgaria, on the other hand, or rather the king who had usurped full control of its destinies, was a more incalculable factor. Jekoff, the Chief of Staff, was assass-



sinated, presumably because he favoured a *rapprochement* with their northern neighbour, and the Bulgarian minister at Bukarest asked for his passports. Turkey was ready to act against any Balkan state.

It was not long, therefore, before Rumania knew the situation with which she was confronted. Russia had promised her a small force to hold the Dobrudja line as a sentinel, and only an inconsiderable army was left there. If Bulgaria chose to attack, the ground was favourable. The Salonika force was acting, but without much effect. There was disease among the troops, and the treacherous behaviour of King Constantine could hardly encourage General Sarrail to launch his full force northwards. The long line of the Danube continued the frontier to Orsova, in Austria-Hungary.

The northern frontier was well covered. Rumania had the largest frontier of all the belligerents in proportion to her size and population. But the northern was the most vulnerable. The Bukovina is more a part of Rumania than Western Macedonia of Bulgaria. The Sereth, Moldava, and Bystryca all rise in the Bukovina, and flow through gaps in the mountains into Rumania. General Lechitsky, in clearing the Bukovina, was therefore clearing the northern and weakest flank of Rumania. In hammering against the Carpathian passes he was doing more: he was interposing a threat to distract and turn the position of any enemy force in Transylvania.

It was there that Rumania's destiny lay. Transylvania, even more than the Bukovina, was part of Rumania's unredeemed territory; and she set about the redemption of it with characteristic Balkan directness. All the near Eastern states were obsessed with the value of possession. If Rumania held Transylvania at the end of the war, it would be hers. Who would undertake another war to turn her out? If it were not hers, it would not be hers. Who would continue the bloody struggle to secure it for her? The policy of Rumania was cool and calculating; but it is clear now that it was short-sighted.

It is true that in helping herself she helped the Allies. If she invaded Transylvania, she would draw thither such troops as could be spared from other fronts, and in so doing would make the task of the Allies easier on those fronts. She probably thought—indeed, it is possible the Allied commanders thought—the enemy was nearer the end of his resources than he proved to be. There can be no doubt that the Allies agreed to her plans; but this, of course, means no more than that they agreed to the inevitable. Who would look a gift horse in the mouth?

Yet we cannot resist examining the alternative plan which Rumania rejected. If she had chosen to strike through Bulgaria, holding the Transylvanian passes on a carefully considered plan, she might have taken Sofia and cut the railway which bound Bulgaria to the Central Powers. That was a stroke which even in August 1916 had yet to be made. While the railway remained intact, Germany's chief political aim in the war had been achieved. But if Rumania had invaded Bulgaria in force, she would have attracted to herself the Bulgars who were holding the lines about the Salonika army, and Sarrail could then have moved northwards. The paucity of communications connecting the Nish-Sofia district with the south was a strong argument against General Sarrail attempting to advance up the Vardar defile.

Rumania, however, did not so choose. Though the advance of large Allied armies through the Dobrudja was announced, and led to the most irresponsible

forecasts, no such armies were there. The Russian force was so small that it was placed under the Rumanian command; and that it was inadequate to give any real help became speedily apparent. The occupation of Transylvania had been determined upon, and the plan upon which the Rumanians acted was bold and skilful. The frontier which faces Austria-Hungary is a huge concave curve of mountains. The Hungarian territory lay in this curve, making a natural salient, and the Rumanian advance was conspicuous at first on the frontier which faces north, giving the chance of forcing the enemy lying in the apex of the curve farther east to fall back.

The accession of Rumania to the cause of the Allies added an army of, from first to last, 1,000,000 troops. The first force of trained men was equal to about 400,000 men, and behind them lay almost as many again of men with some training, and behind them again was a final reserve of men who in extremity could be mobilised. The men were physically strong, and they were fresh. They had so far known none of the hardships of the war, and they were well trained on the European model. Their weakness was material, and this, again, might have seemed to point to a blow to the south to join hands with the Western Allies. The advantage would have been incalculable. They had few heavy guns, and though their general equipment was excellent, it did not err on the side of abundance.

Naturally, the Rumanian army had the defects of its qualities. The troops had not the weariness of the war, but neither had they the experience. Their greatest want was leadership; and the very Latin *flair* which gave them *élan* in attack reacted badly on reverse. In the first week of the war General Presan's 4th Army from the northern boundary to the Oitoz Pass, Averescu's 2nd Army between the Oitoz and the Roter passes, and Culcer's 1st Army between the Roter Turm and the Iron Gates, all advanced rapidly against the 5th Austro-Hungarian divisions, under General Arz. The passes through the mountains from the north to the south were seized, as far as the Iron Gates, which is a sort of river pass. They dominated Orsova, and blocked the Danube to the enemy. Culcer seized the Vulkan Pass on the 29th, and Petroseny, at its northern outlet. He pressed through the Roter Turm Pass, and captured Hermanstadt on 10th October. They had already taken Brasso (or Kronstadt) after piercing the passes which lie below it like the four fingers of a hand. In these operations 1,800 prisoners only were taken, and this is sufficient indication that the enemy was offering no great resistance, but were falling back at a greater speed than that of the Rumanian advance.

**Capture of Jesupol.**—Meanwhile the Allies had been carrying out their part of the bargain. By the treaty of 17th August Russia had agreed to act with particular energy during the Rumanian mobilisation and concentration, to act in a specially vigorous manner in the Bukovina, and to send three divisions to the Dobrudja to keep the Bulgars in play. And Sarraill's army was to strike on 20th August at latest. These engagements were kept as well as the armies could contrive. But the Russian numbers and material were insufficient to carry out Alexeieff's plan with complete success, and Sarraill's offensive was anticipated by the Bulgars.

General Tcherbatcheff began a formidable attack on Bothmer's new positions on 29th August. He struck first at Zavalov, where the enemy front turned away from the Zlota Lipa, and pressed them back from the river. Farther south, after a stern fight, he secured (3rd September) the railway bridge over the Dniester at Jesupol, and advanced towards Halicz. His centre broke the resistance of a Turkish



division at Bozhykov, and reached Lipnica Dolina, on the Narajovka. But on the right he could make no permanent impression on the ridge which defended Brzezany, despite the co-operation of Sakharoff from the north-west. In the first and fourth weeks of September Sakharoff secured tactical successes; but they had no effect upon the resistance at Brzezany, and could not even prevent the reinforcement of the sector facing Tcherbatcheff. The German line bent sharply to the west below Brzezany, but the struggle there and at Lipnica Dolina became positional battles of the type so familiar on the Western front, and at the end of the first week in October the fighting died down.

Lechitsky's operations also lacked the weight to exercise any material influence upon the Rumanian battles. In the first week of September he secured some ground in the Carpathians, and Cottescu's patrols from the Tolgyes Pass achieved contact with the Russians about Dorna Watra; and their *liaison* was made operative on the 11th, when he was successful in clearing Mount Kapul, north of the Kirlibaba Pass. But a few days later the early snows added the deciding resistance to his weakening advance, and on this sector also the offensive died down.

But already the situation had been changed by a sudden enemy advance into the Dobrudja. Mackensen was in command here, and he moved with characteristic decision. He had three Bulgarian and two German divisions at his disposal, and two Turkish divisions were hastening to his assistance. The changes in the German supreme command had caused much speculation among students of the war; but it was agreed that the accession of Hindenburg to the position of Commander-in-Chief (for in effect this was his position), with his old Chief of Staff, Ludendorff, as Chief of Staff, meant that the East rather than the West would be the theatre of such offensive action as the enemy could still contrive. The movement of Mackensen was, therefore, taken to be at least part of the new plan, and a punitive expedition against Rumania was indicated. Falkenhayn had intended that Mackensen should strike across the Danube. Such an operation at this moment might have led to disaster, and it was with sure insight that Ludendorff forbade the movement and ordered the advance in the Dobrudja.

Corn and oil, of which Germany stood badly in need, were to be had in plenty in Rumania. Politically and morally a decision here would reverberate through the world, and would seem to show that, in spite of all the gigantic efforts of the concerted Allied offensive, Germany had the situation so well in hand that she could invade and conquer a country of the dimensions and importance of Rumania. But more: it was clear that the intervention of Rumania had added seriously to the calls upon the enemy's forces. There was now a vast new frontier to defend, and a shorter line on the Transylvanian side could only be found by withdrawing to the Maros line, which would involve the evacuation of almost the whole of the province. But if Germany could pass through Rumania from west to east, she could find a shorter line through to the Black Sea, and it would have behind it another overrun country. Such an achievement would most efficiently counter a serious enemy threat to the Berlin-Sofia railway. It would open up a new door into Russia, and give the chance of turning the line which was now in the Carpathians. The chances seemed too good to miss.

**Salonika Operations.**—The Allied action from Salonika had run a strange course. On the right, where the British army lay, they could not advance into Bulgaria without first storming the Rupel positions, which had been treacherously

surrendered to the enemy by the Greeks in the preceding May. The French, on the left of the British, faced the Vardar defile, and below Monastir lay the rested and reconstituted Serbian army, with the Italians on their left. On 10th August the French bombarded Doiran and captured the station, and five days later secured Doldjeh. But the preparations for an attack, as arranged by the Rumanian treaty, were rudely disturbed by the Bulgars beginning a general offensive. On the 17th Teodorov's 2nd Bulgarian Army on the east, General von Winckler's 11th German Army in the centre, and Gueshov's 1st Bulgarian Army in Macedonia attacked over the whole front. Winckler achieved no success against General Cordonnier's French army; but on the flanks considerable progress was made.

The thin fringe of Serbs suddenly found that the Greek frontier troops, who had formerly stood between them and the Bulgars, had melted away. Florina was entered immediately. Banitzza was lost, and even the Malkanidje, on the west of Lake Ostravo. But there the advance was held, and on 24th August the fighting died down until the Allied offensive on 11th September. Meanwhile the Bulgars had advanced on the Allied right. They approached the Struma, and on 25th August seized the forts of Kavalla, out of which they were shelled by British war-ships. But the position was unprofitable for an Allied advance, and Sarraill quietly handed over the sector east of the Vardar to the British, transferred the French army and the Russian detachment to the left flank, and prepared for an expedition into Macedonia. The Allies had given less help from Salonika than the Russians were able to give in Galicia and the Bukovina.

**Dobrudja.**—The achievements of Mackensen seemed at first to presage a gigantic disaster for the Rumanians. The Dobrudja is a province lying between the lower reaches of the Danube and the Black Sea. Turtukai, a fortified town, lay in it on the banks of the river. It was garrisoned by a division of troops, some 25,000 men. It was separated by the Danube from the main bases, and lay tempting and ready for a sudden blow. Mackensen moved his right wing across the Dobrudja frontier, and then sent the 1st and 4th Bulgar divisions against Turtukai. They drove all the Rumanians into the town, and a Bulgar-German siege division approached it from Rustchuk, and stormed it almost at once. The whole force surrendered on 6th September, and the old guns and some material were taken. No time was lost. The victorious troops were sent hot speed northwards against Silistria, over two days' march distant. Here the town was captured; but the Rumanian 9th Division had retired. They had been warned by the disaster to Turtukai, and had evacuated the town. Centres which are thus isolated are easy prey. But it was with a feeling of dismay that many people heard of these swift successes. So far nothing vital had been lost except a whole division of men. And the central feature of the Dobrudja is that the Danube is a most serious obstacle. Its banks are marshy, and the borders thus extend the difficult space, already wide, for an enemy to cross. It is deep and swift. The only bridge of any sort east of Belgrade is the triple railway bridge of Cernavoda, which carries the line to the Black Sea port of Constanza. The key to the Dobrudja was obviously this railway bridge. Apart from the fact that it was a bridge, and, if seized, a highway to the rear of Rumania, it also brought to the banks of the river those firm supports which are necessary for bridging any wide watercourse. The enemy were advancing rapidly towards the railway bridge. If compelled to retire, the Rumanians would naturally destroy the bridge; but in so doing they would not finally interfere with



a possible crossing by the enemy, and of course would cut themselves off from the Dobrudja.

The Rumanian advance in Transylvania had prospered as much as Mackensen's advance, though the Rumanians had not secured so many prisoners. But the defence of the Dobrudja seemed to have fallen to pieces when the king recalled General Averescu from the command of the 2nd Army in Transylvania and put him in charge of the southern operations. The change was at once apparent. He arrived on the 16th, when the Bulgar-German force was only twelve miles from the Cernavoda-Constanza railway. Reinforcements were sent, and a vigorous counter-attack on the 19th drove Mackensen's force back some ten miles to the south. The Russian-Serbian Corps and Russian cavalry division had contributed considerably to the reverse, and for the moment the defeat was complete. The battle had raged three days, and the right flank of the Rumanians had been assisted by three river monitors, which enfiladed the enemy.

There, however, the enemy halted; the line swayed to and fro, but little progress could be made. A temporary equilibrium was established, and Mackensen was content with this. He had attracted to the Dobrudja a considerable part of the Rumanian forces, and that was a sound preliminary step. He had also achieved another advantage. The Dobrudja has something of the character of an angle, and the further a line is drawn from the apex the greater its extent. By pressing forward Mackensen was able to hold securely a line across the province for which his force would probably have been inadequate farther south. Further, he had secured Turtukai, which lies at a stricture in the course of the river, and hence is a good place for a crossing. And he had halted beyond the old Bulgarian frontier. The Bulgars had also determined to stand by the fruits of possession.

Meanwhile, in the centre and north of Transylvania, the Rumanian advance went on; but the attacking force was checked in the third week of September by the enemy at the Vulkan Pass. Petroseny was evacuated on the 20th, and two days later General Coanda, skilfully disengaging himself from a superior force, was back at the pass. Fighting had shown more signs of determination and coherence about this point from the first—chiefly because a considerable force from the Vulkan Pass, joining with that of Orsova, would threaten the Belgrade-Nish-Sofia railway, and also the communications which supplied the Maros line and the whole defensive to the north. In the last week of the month a battle grew up around Hermannstadt; but the Vulkan Pass had again been cleared by a skilfully contrived counter-attack. Already in one month a third of the lost province had been regained, and as yet there was no thought that all was not as it should be.

Yet at this moment, when the war seemed to be proceeding so advantageously for the Allies, evidence began to appear that all was not well in South-Eastern Europe. The great spurt forward had just occurred on the West. Combles, which the Kaiser had adjured his soldiers to hold at all costs, had been taken skilfully, and Thiepval had fallen forfeit to bewilderment. There seemed no other reason for its easy capture. The Italians were advancing on the Carso, and Sarraïl had begun his Macedonian offensive. In the midst of these successes it became known that the general in command in Transylvania was Falkenhayn, the predecessor of Hindenburg. It was clear that he would not be cast for a minor rôle. Mackensen, the hero of the Galician drive of 1915, and Falkenhayn, who had planned it, were obviously meant for a great *coup*. Mackensen had been outfought in the Dobrudja,

but he had not been decisively defeated. A small force had crossed the Danube in his rear, to prove that the feat was possible and to demonstrate against his communications. But they were confronted with the garrisons of Turtukai and Silistria; their pontoons were blown up by Austrian monitors; and they had to withdraw. The feat proved nothing, and effected little more.

**Hermannstadt.**—The Battle of Hermannstadt first made observers wonder what was brewing in the East. The Roter Turm (Red Tower) Pass, a strange and narrow defile through which the river Alt issues, gives access to the town of Hermannstadt, and the Rumanians had taken the town after pressing through the pass. The Vulkan Pass lies to the west, and the vicissitudes in this pass showed that the importance of the whole neighbourhood was not lost upon the enemy. To deal with the Rumanians there now emerged a larger force with better handling than had appeared before. At the Vulkan Pass honours had been easy. The Red Tower Pass is threaded by a deep and rapid stream, the Alt, and this was, like the Danube for other reasons, a serious obstacle to have in the midst of an army.

The first blow of Falkenhayn was directed to Hermannstadt. He drove the Rumanians out of the town, and forced them to retire on the hill beyond. They left the town unhurt, and prepared to stand on a small hill to the north-east. The enemy was carefully handled, and prepared to envelop the position. A force of Bavarian Alpini, under General Krafft von Delmensingen, was sent round to the south-west to cross the mountain barrier and strike in the rear of the Rumanians' line of retreat. When they had got into position, the frontal attack was launched in great fury. The Rumanians fell back. Falkenhayn's left had cut off the troops from the 2nd Army, and in theory they were enveloped. Before them, blocking their line of retreat, was the long line of supply wagons. They had to retire astride the deep and rapid Alt. The manœuvre might have been accomplished in safety if the road had been clear. It would have been difficult, but not impossible, to accomplish.

But the Bavarians were now over the mountains, and descending upon the one road. The Rumanian advance guards found them in the way, and reported the fact. It was a situation every great general desires to bring about. But the enemy had not reckoned on the resourcefulness and mobility of the Rumanians. Quietly and without a hitch the bulk crossed the river, though how they did it is something of a mystery, and the envelopment failed to secure its object. The trap closed, but few men were found in it. From the whole of the Hermannstadt operations hardly 3,000 prisoners were taken. There was a considerable amount of material, voluntarily abandoned, some guns made as useless as possible, some rolling stock on the railway. The Reichstag was in session. "A decisive defeat" was announced. Congratulations were showered abroad. And when the list of actual captures came a sense of disappointment arose. Nothing was decisive; the task was yet to accomplish. The Rumanian Staff had proved a match for the enemy.

The same sort of thing happened at Brasso. When the Battle of Hermannstadt was fought, Crainiceanu, now in charge of the 2nd Army, was still advancing, and on 3rd October he was but twelve miles from Schassburg. But his left flank was uncovered by the retreat from Hermannstadt. Falkenhayn struck at it, and the Rumanians fell back by Fogaras on Brasso. Using largely the same forces transferred from the Hermannstadt front by the lateral railway, an attempt was made to envelop the Rumanians there. The blow again fell, and on 8th October the enemy



was once more in possession of Brasso, but had not cut off the Rumanians. From the first they stood fast in the Predeal Pass. The reason was plain. The Predeal Pass, alone of the four in this sector, carries a road and railway. Heavy artillery has the disadvantage that it is pinned to a railway. Field guns can travel on passable roads, mountain guns can be packed and go by a mule track, but heavy artillery cannot move without a railway. Even if the guns could be moved, a sufficient head of suitable ammunition would require the services of a railway. Already in the war the heaviest artillery had been taken along the roads of Northern France by traction engines, but four were required for each piece; and in the presence of an actual enemy it was precarious to occupy the roads with objects which could be so clearly seen and marked down.

The capture of Brasso did, however, mark a complete turn in the Transylvanian situation. Only two days before the Rumanians were still fighting forty-five miles from their own frontier, and fighting successfully. Enemy reinforcements now began to make their appearance. The reverses of Hermannstadt and Brasso might have seemed, taken by themselves, as local and temporary reverses. It now became certain that a large and serious campaign was in process of development. The Rumanians began to withdraw over the whole of Transylvania, fighting stubborn rearguard actions and making the maximum resistance, but retiring nevertheless. All over Europe attention became concentrated upon Rumania. Was she to suffer the cruel fate of Serbia? That was the question that was asked, and there could be no certain reply.

The day following the evacuation of Brasso the enemy took the Torzburg, with 1,175 prisoners and some material. This was far more than the aftermath of the Brasso battle. It was another attempt to turn the resistance that could not be broken in frontal attack. The Torzburg was one of the passes below Brasso. The entrance had been gained, and even the heights, and these were a more considerable advantage. Behind the hills the guns could be laboriously brought up, and observation posts on the heights would mark down the range and note the damage. The preliminaries to further advance were all arranged. The Torzburg Pass lay to the west of the Predeal Pass. An advance down it, if it could be pressed to a certain point, would threaten to turn the positions to the east. Furthermore, although the pass was merely a break in the mountains, about twenty miles to the south there lay the railhead of Campulung. This would serve as well as the Predeal railway, and, once gained and held in force, the Predeal Pass would be evacuated under compulsion.

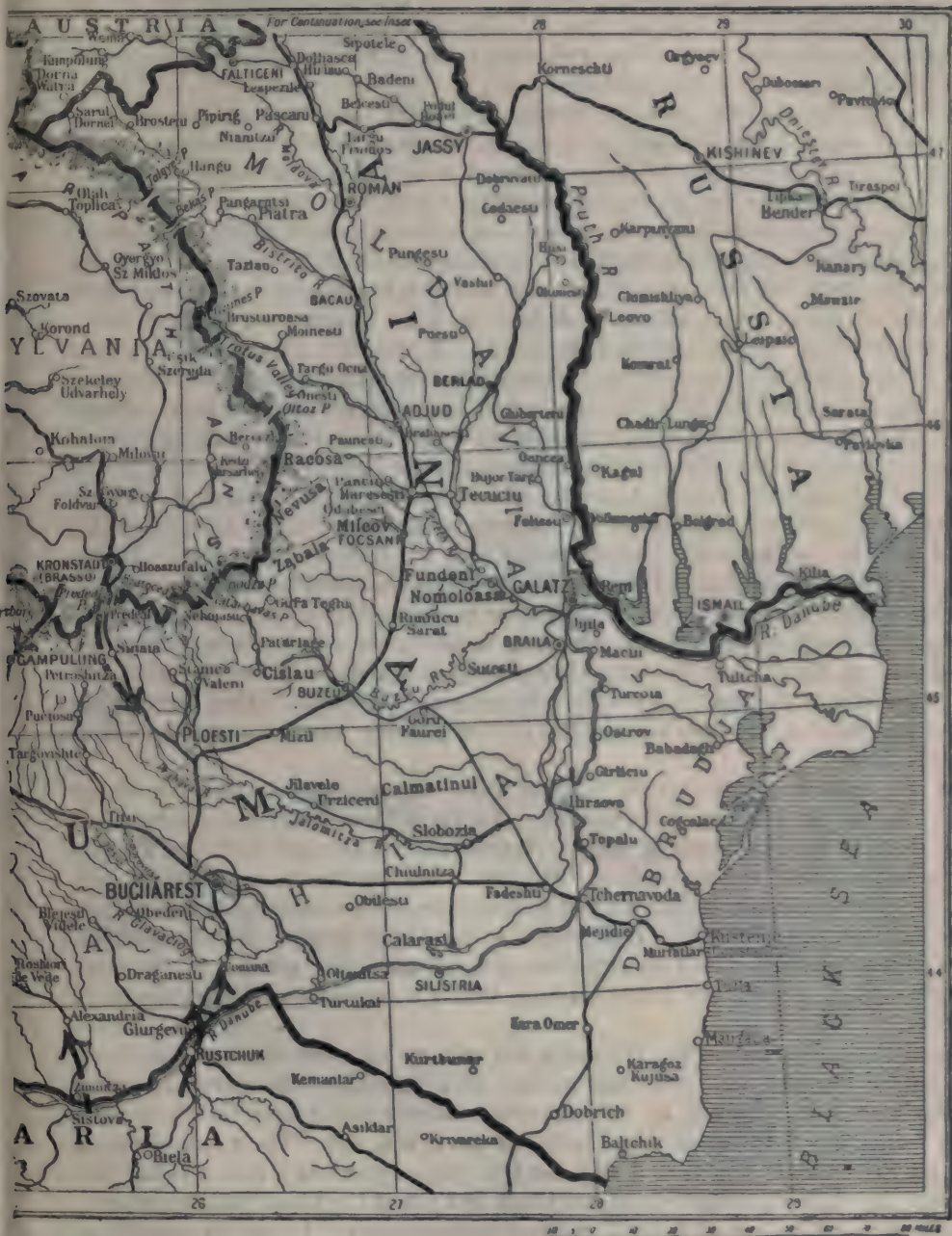
The situation was sufficiently serious to call for strong measures. A sort of equilibrium seemed to have been achieved in the Dobrudja, though Mackensen was lying entrenched across the province. He had tried to advance, but in vain. Averescu was recalled, and sent to his old command—the 2nd Rumanian Army. The Allies were making every effort to help Rumania. Strong and fierce attacks were made repeatedly by the Russians, and no doubt these had their part in limiting the force sent against the Rumanians. The Italians had leaped forward again on the Carso towards Trieste. But von Falkenhayn had pushed down the Torzburg Pass to Rucar, seven miles beyond the frontier, and in the face of this nothing else mattered. Averescu promptly organised a counter-attack through the Predeal Pass. This was a clever move, as it placed the enemy in the Torzburg Pass in almost exactly the same precarious position they had produced by their advance through it. If the counter-



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attack in the Predeal Pass had been wholly successful, the enemy would have been compelled to withdraw. Prisoners were taken, and a retirement actually was forced in the Predeal Pass, but it was not enough. The enemy was held at Rucar, but the fact of chief significance was that he remained there, entrenched, strengthening his position and bringing up reinforcements.

On the 16th October the situation further developed. A strong enemy offensive was initiated against the Dorna Watra region, which covered the junction of the Russian and Rumanian forces. There was even a violent attack farther north against the Jablonica Pass, and although the first movement made no headway, and the second met with a severe reverse, it was clear that a skilful and well-thought-out plan was at work. The forces engaged in Transylvania at this time were computed to be about 200,000 men—some ten divisions, obtained by taking a battalion from here and there all over the divisions in the German and Austrian lines. It was a formidable force, and it was handled with caution and great skill. Indeed the concentration of such a force in this phase of the war and its dispatch to Transylvania showed the German Staff at its best—cynically cool, skilful, alert to seize every chance with the utmost energy. Mackensen's force was estimated at about half that of von Falkenhayn.

The Rumanians were only now beginning to see the logic of their position. The very complicated movements of Averescu seemed to indicate with blazing clearness the paucity of good generals inured to the new conditions of war. Christesco, his Chief of Staff in the Dobrudja, had succeeded him, but had yet to be tried. It was this that led the Allies to send from the Western front a military mission. General Berthelot, a former Chief of Staff to Joffre, with eight colonels, eight majors, eight captains, and some junior officers, was sent to Rumania; and, after visiting the headquarters of Alexeieff on the way, they arrived in Rumania on the day when the enemy commenced to make his advance in force on the north. They were made much of and fêted; but they arrived too late to prevent the development of Hindenburg's plans.

The day following their arrival Gyimes Pass was penetrated, and the enemy reached Egas, seven miles from the frontier. This new blow, striking at the northern railway, had to be dealt with at once. Averescu's counter-attack in the Predeal Pass, far to the south, was succeeding. He took a few hundred more prisoners, and forced the enemy to retire. And a recoil in the Gyimes Pass achieved some success. For the moment a sort of equilibrium seemed to have been struck. But Falkenhayn pressed forward again in the Torzburg Pass, and advanced five miles. It was while the world was digesting this state of affairs that a new movement was begun by the enemy.

Behind the enemy line in the Dobrudja the railway had been repaired. Artillery was carefully brought up. Reinforcements were hurriedly concentrated, and a smashing blow was struck. In two days the railway connecting the Cernavoda railway bridge and Constanza, the Black Sea port, was cut. There was no good line of retreat behind Constanza; and the Dobrudja was at any rate a *cul de sac*, an isthmus between the Danube and the Black Sea; and the Russians, Rumanians, and Serbs were withdrawn, leaving Constanza to the enemy. It was a severe blow. Constanza was Rumania's largest port, the outlet by which she disposed of her huge stores of corn and oil. Probably this had something to do with the blow of Mackensen. No doubt he hoped to find there vast stores to feed the half-starving population of the enemy. The grain docks were huge; the oil tanks were many



and vast. The port was a great emporium of cosmopolitan trade in peace time, and its loss caused a feeling of dismay to flow throughout the Allied countries.

It was just eight weeks to the day since Rumania had entered the war. Her campaign had known extraordinary vicissitudes. She had at one time seemed in a fair way to secure the whole of Transylvania. Suddenly part of the Dobrudja was lost, and then little by little the whole of the territory she had taken. Then the enemy pressed through her passes. They were accomplishing one of the most difficult feats of warfare. But the Rumanians had not fortified their frontier, and the advance was not difficult. Russian reinforcements had been sent. The Russians, the Italians, the French, and the British were exercising their maximum pressure. But all to no purpose. The blight that seemed to attach to all who espoused the cause of the Allies had fallen on the latest adherent.

Here it is convenient to break off the story of Rumania's campaign. She had tried to help the Allies. No doubt she had helped them much. She had attracted to her frontier forces which would have been felt on the main battle fronts. She had helped others, but she could not help herself. Her soldiers paid the penalty of her politicians. Russia had wished Rumania to enter the war in June, when Alexeieff's armies were fresh and his munitions plentiful. But they had refused, and actually began their offensive when Russia was spent. Alexeieff had counselled one strategy; the Rumanians chose another. It would have been a miracle if they had succeeded.

But the effect was disastrous. Hindenburg had contrived a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*. The Allies claimed that they were at length in the ascendant. The Germans organised a new and formidable offensive to prove that they had still freedom of movement. Yet it was a spurious proof. The German successes in Rumania convinced only the irresponsible. Yet these composed the bulk of all populations; and the new victories impressed them as well as the German public.

## VI. THE CAPTURE OF GORIZIA AND THE ADVANCE ON THE CARSO.

THE German Staff made two attempts to avert an overwhelming simultaneous attack by the Allies, and they achieved a partial success with the second. The long-drawn-out struggle at Verdun did not cause the Allies to anticipate their attack even by a day. But the invasion of Venetia from the Trentino compelled General Alexeieff to anticipate his offensive and to change his plan; and it also caused General Cadorna to be late in striking across the Isonzo.

The Italian Staff did not delay a moment longer than was necessary, and we cannot but admire the *sangfroid* which resumed the preparations for the original plan four days after the Austrians began to retire on the Trentino front. These preparations occupied almost exactly a month, and they included the transference of reserves, drafts, and material to the Isonzo front, at the same time that the Austrians were fully engaged in the area of their advance and by the skilful and threatening incursion into the Alps. The latter operation began on 27th June, and did not cease until the weather broke in the fall of the year; and, proceeding step by step, at length compelled a heavy concentration in the area.

After the general preparation began the special on 27th July; and from this day

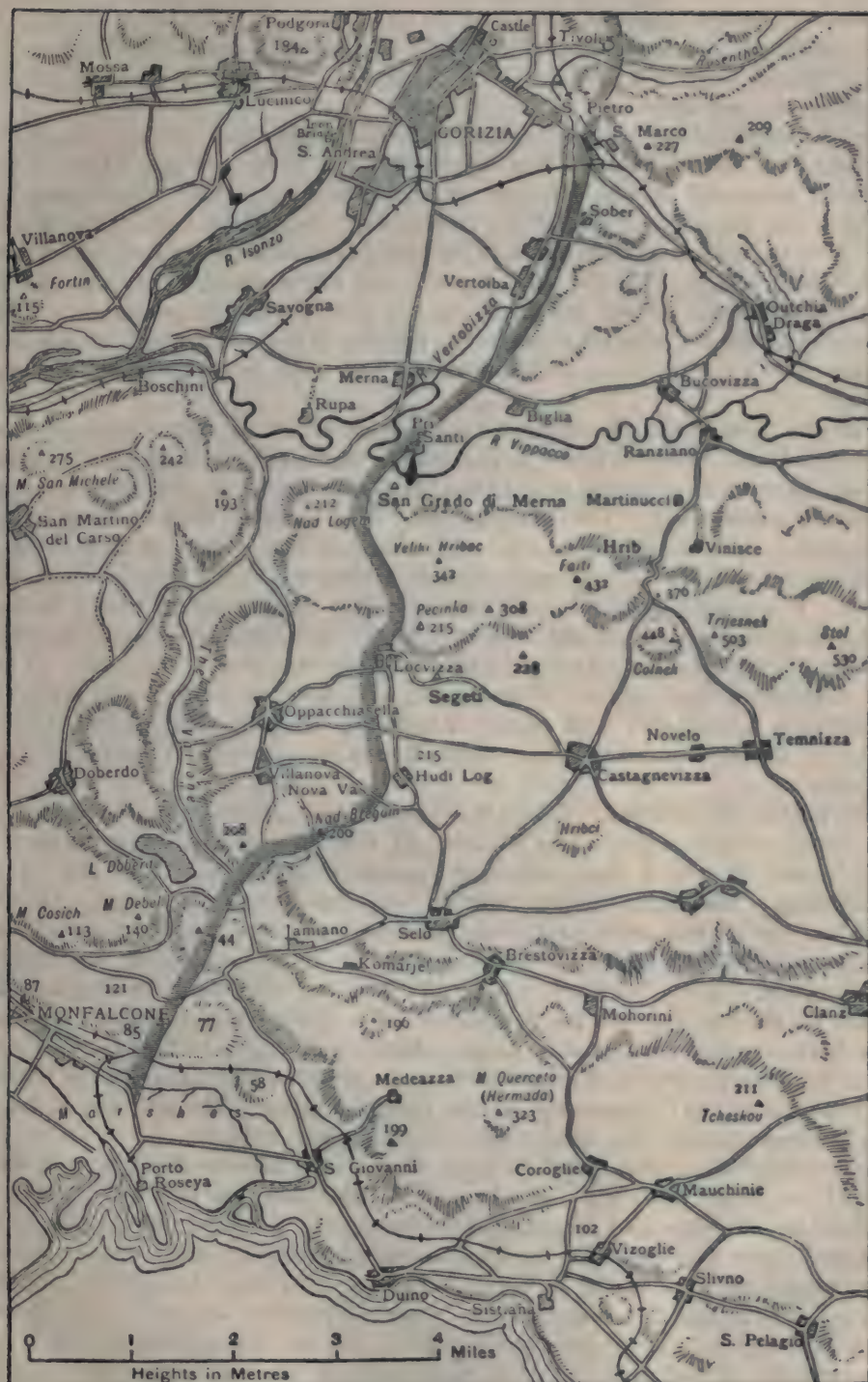
until the battle opened the time was occupied in concentrating the fresh units for the assault, the guns and *bombarde* (a sort of gigantic trench mortar). The attack was to be made by the 3rd Army, commanded by the Duke of Aosta, and its immediate objective was Gorizia; but, faithful to the common purpose of the Allies, General Cadorna meant to continue his offensive as long as his material and the weather permitted. In effect, the offensive fell into four clearly marked phases. The first extended until 15th August, and was succeeded by a pause of a month; the second comprised the battles of 14th, 15th, and 16th September, which was terminated by rains and mists; the third began on 10th October, and was cut short on the 13th by another break in the weather; and the fourth occupied the 30th and 31st October and the 2nd and 3rd November. The campaigning weather ceased then for the year.

A great bombardment was opened on 1st August from Monte Sabotino to the sea, and on the 4th the attack was launched against the southern fringes of the Carso. The troops carried Hills 85 and 121, but found themselves in trenches filled with exploding asphyxiating bombs. In the confusion resulting from this mischance the Austrians counter-attacked, and the Italians were compelled to retire to their original positions. The guns resumed their bombardment, and General Boroévitch, thinking that the Italian plan was disclosed, increased his forces on the Carso.

On the morning of Sunday, 6th, a terrific fire was opened upon the ten-mile sector between Monte Sabotino and Monte San Michael. The former lay west, the latter east of the river on the northern escarpment of the Carso. Gorizia lies in a little plain in the midst of hills. Unless the hills below Monte Sabotino—Oslavia and the ridge of Podgora—were occupied, the Gorizia bridgehead could not be approached; unless San Michael were taken, it could not be held. Monte Sabotino, Podgora, and San Michael had all seen Italian troops on their summits before; and they were again to witness fierce fighting. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon that the new attack was launched, with Colonel Badoglio of the General Staff directing a brigade of the 45th Division against Sabotino. In less than an hour Sabotino was in Italian hands; and as the troops swept on and mastered the peaks towards the river, the supporting troops were able to capture the Austrian defenders as they emerged from their deep dug-outs and caverns. The Umbria (43rd Division) and Abruzzi (24th Division) brigades had a stiff struggle in the Oslavia region. The Cuneo brigade (11th Division) rushed the northern end of Podgora, and the 12th Division cleared the southern end and south-eastern slopes. But for two days the Austrians resisted in their dug-outs and beyond the river, east of Podgora.

But by nightfall of the first day the northern key to Gorizia was practically won. The battle for the southern, San Michael, had also won the assurance of final success. The Brescia, Ferrara, and Catanzaro brigades of the 22nd Division at the end of the day were holding the summit, but had not been able to clear the northern slopes on the southern communications. East of Monfalcone, Hill 85 was assaulted once more, and was securely won. On the 7th a confused battle was fought in the Sabotino area, where the Austrians threw reinforcements across the river and counter-attacked repeatedly. It was not till the afternoon of the 8th that the Italians were able to reach the river. That night the Pavia and Casale brigade threw covering troops across the river, and cavalry and cyclist detachments were ordered to reconnoitre. Meanwhile the positions on San Michael had been improved. Boschini, on the northern slopes near the river, had been captured, and before





The Italian Front after the Fall of Gorizia.

noon on 9th August Gorizia was entered by the Carabinieri. Its broad streets, fine white buildings, and beautiful gardens made it a splendid prize. The cavalry and cyclists spread south and west to the Vertoibizza. The Austrians had recognised the inevitable, and had fallen back.

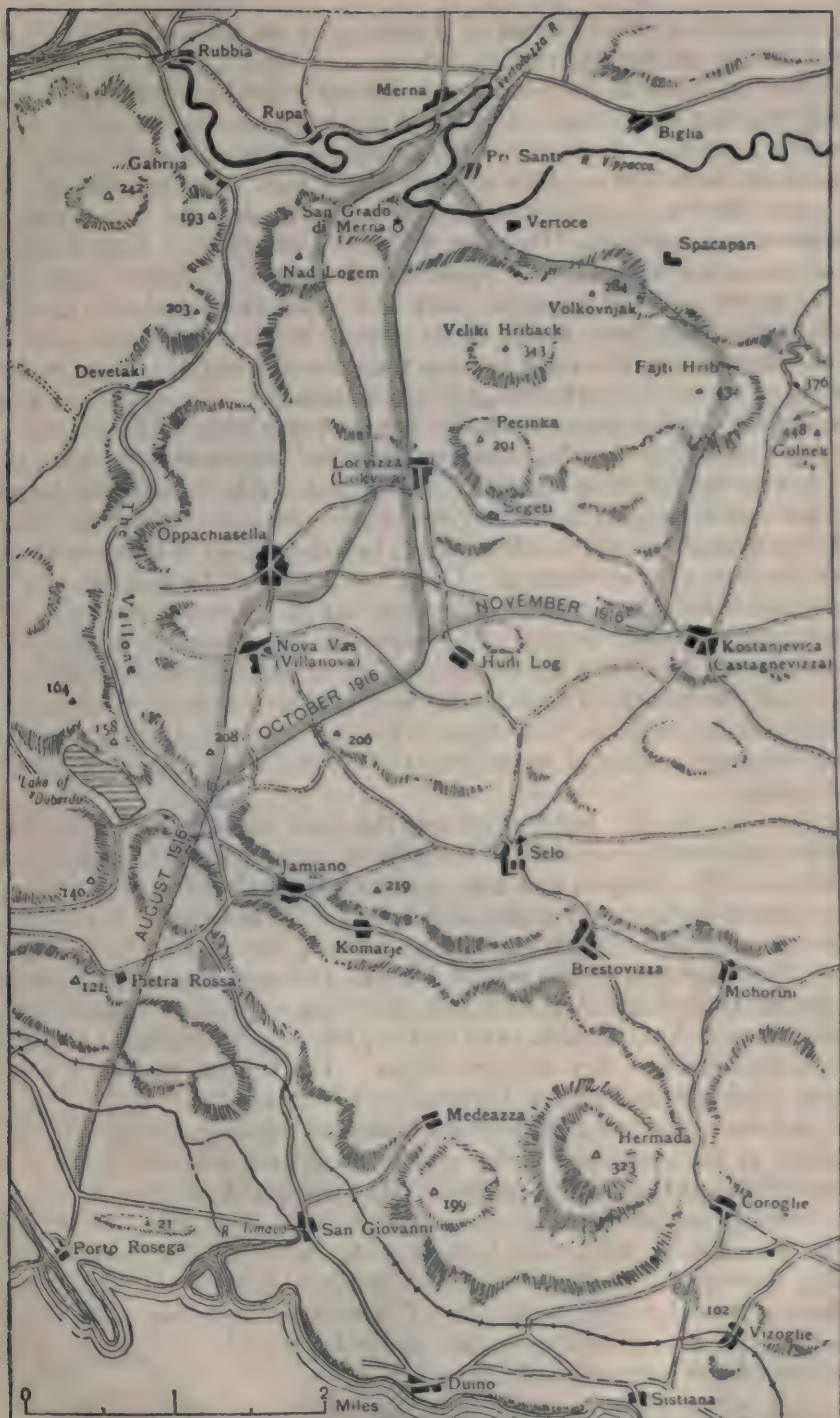
On the following day the southern sector of the battle-front yielded. The attack extended from San Michael to Monte Cosisch, north of Monfalcone. The advance was most successful on the left and centre. Doberdo plateau was cleared, and the Austrians were pressed east of the Vallone depression which cuts off the western Carso from the east. On the 11th the 23rd Division crossed the Vallone, and reached the hill Nad Logem. On the next day this hill was stormed, Oppacchiasella was occupied, and Monte Debeli was finally cleared after a stubborn resistance. Tivoli, to the east of Gorizia, also fell; but in the fighting of the next three days it became obvious that the Austrians had re-formed, and were lying upon an organised position.

The first phase of the offensive, with the capture of Gorizia, sent a wave of enthusiasm over Italy. The 3rd Army had also taken 18,758 prisoners, 30 guns, 63 trench mortars, 92 machine guns, and over 12,000 rifles, with a great head of shell, and much small-arm ammunition. The positions they had secured were of even greater importance; and though an interval was necessary before the advance could be resumed, the recent successes ensured their resumption under advantageous conditions. It was during this interval that the Italian Government at length declared war upon Germany as from 28th August. From the beginning Germany had been assisting Austria-Hungary against Italy, and the latter was, of course, at war with Germany's ally. Social, ecclesiastical, and financial reasons for preserving a semblance of neutrality with regard to Germany gradually disappeared, and the capture of Gorizia seemed to break down the last obstacles to an open declaration of hostility.

**The Battles on the Carso.**—Before the offensive was resumed the military outlook had considerably changed. The British and French were still going forward on the Somme. Brussiloff was continuing to make headway in Galicia and in the Carpathians. The Allies' newest recruit was invading Transylvania. Cadorna knew that Sarraill was about to strike in Salonika, and the atmosphere seemed filled with hope. It was in such circumstances that, all things being ready, the Duke of Aosta opened a heavy bombardment on the front between the river Vipacco and the sea on the morning of 14th September. No advance could be made eastward from Gorizia while the guardian heights Monte Santo, Monte San Gabriele, and Monte San Daniele remained in Austrian hands, with the Bainsizza plateau beyond. But to the south the Carso seemed to offer greater promise. The first very elaborate lines had been taken. The second were reported less formidable.

It was the Carso, then, which Cadorna chose as the area for his prolonged offensive. If he could break through those formidable defences and win his way to Trieste, the outlook would be changed as by magic. So when the thunder of the guns died down a moment for the lengthening of the range, the troops of the 3rd Army went forward from the Vipacco to the sea. About an hour before the time arranged for the attack a thunderstorm swept the plateau, and in the pouring rain the assault began. Its fortune was unequal. On the left a distinct success was achieved east of Nad Logem. Over practically all the rest of the line little impression was made on the stubborn defence; and though a second advance was





Progress of the Italian Offensive in Autumn of 1916.

made in the evening which carried the Italians past the little hill on which lies San Grado di Merna, the day had yielded little.

The men lay down in the pouring rain while the guns continued their thunder. The next day San Grado was reduced, and on the Oppacchiasella sector the troops approached Locvizza. Everywhere the fighting was of the most stubborn character; and the same is true of the struggle on the 16th. The line was carried eastward, some Austrian counter-attacks were repulsed, and the troops dug in and consolidated their position. The new Austrian positions had been fortified with the greatest care and skill; and though the Italians had secured 4,394 prisoners and some useful points of departure for a new attack, they had only taken a step forward in what had been meant to be a swift series. Rains and mists settled down on the plateau—the rains to clog the advance, and the mists making the registering of hits and observation generally impossible. On at least one occasion the preparatory bombardment was made, but the storm forbade the infantry attack.

On 9th October the bombardment was resumed, continued all night, and rose to a climax on the following morning. But a thick fog hung over the plateau, and at 2.45 P.M., when the attack was delivered, it was through a curtain of mist. This proved both a handicap and an advantage. In some places the troops went straight through the lines and were cut off. Contact was difficult to keep, and, of course, this operated chiefly against the advancing troops. But on the whole the 3rd Army achieved a distinct success. They were able to capture the crest of Hill 144, which had been so stubborn an outpost of the tremendously strong position of the tunnelled hill Hermada. The line had been pushed out and straightened below Oppacchiasella and as far north as Sober. The most westerly of those new positions to which the Austrians had retreated after the fall of Gorizia were now in the hands of the Italians.

The next day the mist lay heavily over the front like a pall, and the Austrians seized the opportunity to attack the Italians, who were not yet established in their new positions. The struggle was most severe on the Italian left, where the Vertobizza runs north-east below Vertoiba and Sober. The mist lifted in the afternoon, and after a stern fight the Italians went forward along the whole front below Gorizia. They captured Sober, carried Pecinka Hill, and reached the outskirts of Locvizza and Hudi Log. A further day of strenuous fighting carried the troops near the summit of Veliki Hribac; and on the 13th, after an advance north of Sober, the battle died down in the stormy weather. The Italians had as a precaution withdrawn slightly from Pecinka, Locvizza, and Hudi Log.

The weather again put a brake upon Cadorna's advance, and it was the more unfortunate as the conditions under which the fighting was taking place offered considerable chances to relentless pressure. The Carso could not be easily entrenched, and the troops were fighting hand to hand away from their cover. The Austrians had been ejected from the fissures blasted in the rock, and the Italians, intent on advancing, were not occupying them. In such circumstances Cadorna's resources might have achieved a decisive success. The losses on both sides were heavy, and after the first day not appreciably smaller on the Italian side. But Cadorna claimed to have taken 8,000 prisoners, and Boroevitch 2,700.

The third advance began, after a fortnight's rains and mists, on 30th October. By this time the tide of battle had definitely turned in Rumania; the Battle of the Somme was near its end; the Russian offensive had worn itself out; and



while these things were shaping, the troops could not go forward because of the weather. In one way the delay was not wholly lost, for the head of shell accumulated and the bombardment was heavier than ever before on this front. The troops advanced a little after 11 A.M. on the last day of the month. On the northern sector of the line the advance went forward irresistibly. A useful readjustment was made near San Marco and at Tivoli. The 6th and 12th Bersaglieri regiments rushed Pecinka in a little over half an hour. A division "leap-frogged" the brigade and took Veliki Hribac in reverse. Locvizza was taken. The troops penetrated to within 1,000 yards of Castagnevizza, and even seized Jamiano, but without being able to hold it in face of the terrible fire from Hermada.

On the right once more the struggle made very little change. The Austrians could not be moved from Hill 77. But an examination of the map will show how the Carso lines had been overrun in the north, and Boroévitch determined to deliver a counter-attack. Just after midnight of the 2nd November the Austrian batteries began to shell the hills lying within the salient which the Italians had secured below the Vippacco. After about twelve hours' bombardment the Austrian infantry attacked Pecinka and Hill 308. They advanced very gallantly; but the Italian artillery and machine guns cut swathes in their ranks. They re-formed and renewed the assault time after time; but at length the impetus had vanished, and the Italians pursued the retiring enemy. They succeeded in pushing out the salient still farther on the north-east, and captured the ridge, Fajt Hrib, which overlooks the neighbourhood between the Vippacco and Castagnevizza. On the following day the Duke of Aosta, in order to make his salient secure, sent the 49th Division north-eastward against the ridge of Volkovnjak. The crest was captured and the troops pushed down to the Vippacco, which they occupied almost up to Biglia.

The battle had now yielded 8,750 officers and men prisoners, and had carried the 3rd Army up to the third Austrian defensive system. Cadorna had proved the strength of the Carso defences south of Hudi Log; but the line which confronted the new salient was largely improvised. An interval for reorganisation, and it was proposed to make a great attempt to break through. But the weather had broken when the preparations were complete, and Cadorna had reluctantly to abandon the idea of further operations for the season. Everywhere winter was imposing an armistice on the combatants, and it must have been welcome to the hard-pressed troops of Boroévitch.

## VII. THE CAPTURE OF MONASTIR.

EARLY in the morning of Sunday, 19th November, the French troops entered Monastir, and the chief symbol of the prize for which the Bulgars entered the war—Western Macedonia—was lost to the enemy. It was the fourth anniversary of the Serbs' capture of the city from the Turks.

Rumania at the moment was feeling the full weight of the enemy's pressure and giving way under it, and the successful operations from the south served to hearten her in the struggle. It was a tangible success, the first of all the Allied dealings with the Balkans; and it suggested that perhaps a new era was dawning for the Allies.

The Balkans, indeed, showed the Allies at their worst. They could produce

troops of superb fighting quality, and could make heavy sacrifices willingly, but they could not agree with sufficient speed upon a definite policy and carry it through to the end. Almost all their dealings were marked by the spirit of compromise, which is productive of only the second best in peace, and is fatal in war. Nowhere was this so terribly exemplified as in Greece. The Salonika force was itself a compromise. The British Staff had not wished to send a force there at all. Their choice was the Dardanelles; and it was some mad essence of compromise that led them to abandon the Dardanelles and go to Salonika. Competent experts were convinced that 100,000 troops would have carried the Dardanelles campaign to a successful issue. They were denied, and the British consented to send a small force to Salonika instead. If they meant to go there at all, they should have sent a force which in numbers, quality, and equipment was competent to rescue Serbia and prevent the enemy securing his corridor to Baghdad. If they had done this, it is unthinkable that Bulgaria would have been so mad as to go against them; and if not Bulgaria, certainly not Greece. The Allies committed the cardinal error in warfare of initiating a series of operations without the force necessary to carry them through to a successful issue.

From this sprang the immobility of the Salonika force. It was strong enough to defend itself at Salonika, but too weak to move against the railway which united the enemy's eastern allies to Berlin. The same spirit was shown in the Allied dealings with Greece. They landed at Salonika on the invitation of Venizelos, the one clear mind among the Balkan statesmen; but they never had the King's sympathy, and were forced to put up with but a poor share of his tolerance. We may read his attitude aright if we recall that he was a soldier with an extraordinary belief in German arms. The bulk of his generals also believed that Germany was all she claimed to be in a military sense. But while the Allies could have no possible objection to this opinion, it was their duty to take cognisance of it, and see that it did not issue in open enmity to the Allied cause.

The safety of the Allied army at Salonika depended upon the attitude of Greece. If the King had declared his enmity, he could have been dealt with; but he chose a course that was more cunning while ensuring his safety. His pose was benevolent neutrality. Hostile acts showed his true colours, and yet nothing was done to deal with him. It was still worse when Venizelos, after the King had cast the Greek Constitution to the winds, at last broke with the King. The Allies were not prepared to accord him full recognition with the parts of Greece which joined him, and were even capable of standing aside while his followers were maltreated. It was established in November 1916 that the Royalists were punishing the adherents of Venizelos in Athens—were, in fact, following the royal cue which had refused to have anything to do with Venizelos or Venizelists. This was to allow the friends of the Allies to suffer for their predilection. But it was also made clear that although the Allies acknowledged the *de facto* sovereignty of Venizelos over such parts of Greece as followed his lead, no such intimation was conveyed to him. Who can find the justification of such folly?

But the results of this spirit were even worse. There were reports of the concentration of arms by the Royalists. It was even suggested that the King was secretly mobilising. There was certainly much spying on behalf of the enemy, and there were bases for U-boats in the Greek islands. A fleet put into Athens under the command of a French admiral and attempted to impose some recognition



of the true state of the case upon the Greek Royalists ; but clearly, towards December, they were looking to the coming of a large German army, after the conquest of Rumania, and became almost openly defiant. The French admiral made demands for the handing over of certain war material which was about equal to that surrendered by the Greeks to the enemy with Fort Rupel. It was refused, and the admiral landed troops at certain parts of Athens, being assured by the King that no disturbance would take place. But the Greeks in large numbers opened fire on the Allied troops, and there were a number of casualties. This treachery led to a little shelling from the fleet ; but an armistice was arranged and a compromise offered by Greece.

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This serious state of things in Greece made the position of the Allied forces critical ; but no decisive step was taken, and Athens became almost anarchic. Meanwhile General Sarrail, with such grave pre-occupations in his mind, had to carry out an offensive to help Rumania. The operations opened in mid-September, but already long preparations had been made and preliminary operations initiated to keep the enemy dispositions as they were. Sarrail's objective was Monastir, the chief city of Western Macedonia, and his chances of success there were dependent upon sufficient pressure being exercised on the Struma front, looking towards the east and north-east. Otherwise the enemy might make a temporary concentration on the Monastir front and so bring the Allied effort to nothing.

In this field the Allies had the advantage of acting upon interior lines, and this imposed a corresponding handicap upon the enemy. The Salonika front had the conformation of a section of a wheel, Salonika being the hub, and the communications radiating from it representing the spokes. Thus a first-rate road ran from Salonika to Seres, crossing the river Struma by the Orliak bridge. A railway ran to Lake Doiran ; and both rail and road ran to Monastir. These communications gave freedom and speed of movement to the Allies. There were no good lateral communications on the enemy side ; and, although the problem of a great Balkan offensive was still communications, the winter had not been wholly wasted. Methods of supply and transport had been thought out, and 300 lorries of our Motor Transport Service had been lent to the Serbs.

The railway administration had been taken over by the Allies, armoured motor cars were introduced, and mobile motor columns were organised. The evacuation of the wounded was admirably contrived by mule litters to the field ambulances. The prevalent malaria and dysentery had been the subject of much thought, and the dangers had been diminished by careful drainage and circumspection in choosing the areas for trench systems. From the extreme east of the line railroad and sea were used for evacuating the wounded.

The operations for the capture of Monastir opened, as we have said, towards mid-September. The western flank of Sarrail's army was the operative section, and it consisted of Serbs, French, and Russians. The Serbs about the Lake Ostrovo were on the right flank of the Allied striking force, the 3rd Army commanded by General Vassitch and the 1st by Marshal Misitch. From Lake Doiran to the extreme east lay the British under General Milne. Their rôle was detention : they were to attack to such purpose that the Bulgars dare not remove any troops to the threatened sector. The extreme west converged on Albania, where the Italians lay in occupation of Avlona.

Of the enemy, the bulk were Bulgars, some two-thirds of their whole force being on this front. The other third was the nucleus of Mackensen's army, the Danube Army as it came to be called later, though its first field of action was the Dobrudja. Besides the Bulgars, there were present some Turks; and Austro-Hungarians and two-thirds of a German division confronted the British alone. At least one Prussian regiment lay about Monastir, and when events were critical, attempted to turn the scale in favour of the enemy. There were masses of German and Austrian artillery.

Upon the sound principle that the best defence is a vigorous attack, the enemy, towards the end of August and the beginning of September, commenced to attack the whole front. He occupied Kavala, a port on the *Ægean* Sea, which placed him in a position to outflank any move towards Bulgaria. He concentrated against the Struma front, fearing this avenue of approach most, since it lay as a spearhead towards Sofia. He bombarded the neighbourhood of Lake Doiran, and assaulted the Serbs about Lake Ostrovo. But the Allied offensive, fixed for a certain date, was not hampered or impeded by these attacks. The first object was the approach to Monastir directly; and after the frontal attack had proved unsuccessful, the second objective was to turn the strong defensive organisation across the plain south of Monastir, from the flanking mountain mass.

The British opened the operations on 10th September by crossing the Struma at six points. The columns which thus took the offensive were not large, but they achieved their purpose of establishing positions across the river. After capturing several villages and taking a number of prisoners, they crushed the inevitable counter-attacks and returned to the right bank of the river, smashing by artillery fire the attempts of the enemy to follow them. The Bulgars thought the offensive was coming from this quarter, and when the columns withdrew, saw a retreat in the manœuvre. On the 13th the Lancashire Fusiliers and Liverpool Regiment attacked a salient between the Vardar and Lake Doiran, and, after destroying a machine-gun post, withdrew.

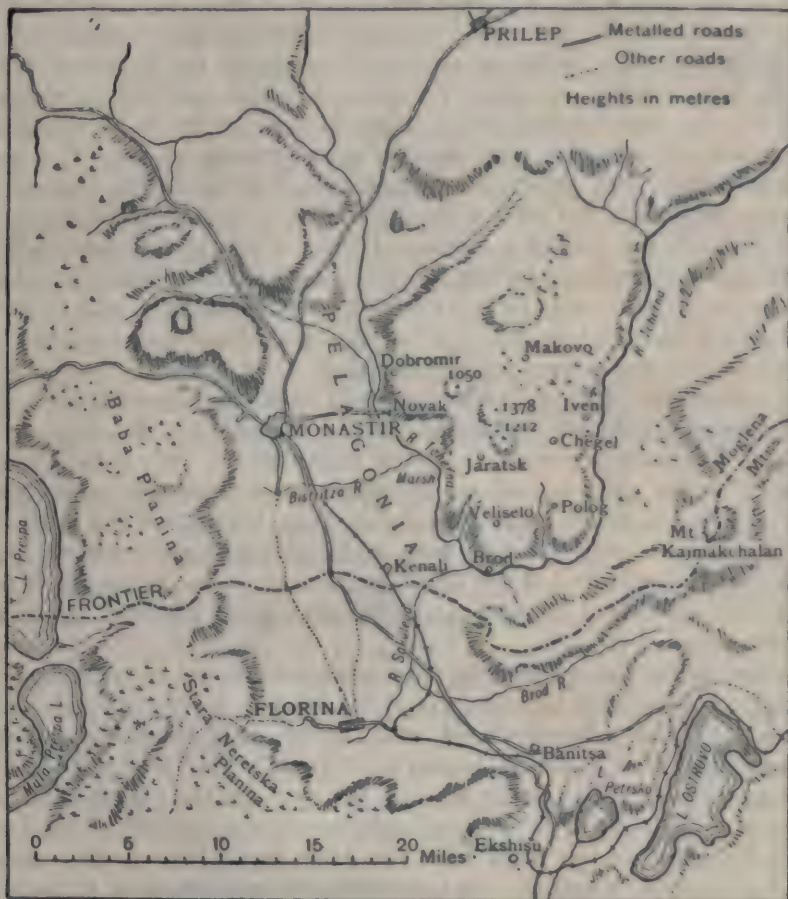
Meanwhile the Serbs had been reinforced, and upon the 14th began an advance from Lake Ostrovo. The advance from this direction was confronted with a line of hills, rising to a peak some 6,000 feet above the level of the country. The peak, named after the range, Kajmakalan, lies due north of the northern end of the lake, commanding the ridge and the surrounding levels. East of the lake, the ridge curved round to offer a cover to the town of Florina, which lies in the Monastir plain. The Serbs captured this part of the ridge on the second day of the assault, driving their hereditary enemies, the Bulgars, over the slopes towards Florina. In two days, such was the impetus of their attack, they had taken over thirty field guns and a number of prisoners, and were over the ridge approaching the river Brod, a tributary of the Cerna. On the left of their advance the Serbs, in conjunction with the French, forced the line of the river, and on the 18th entered Florina.

This success was, so to say, in suspense, until the peak of Kajmakalan had been taken. It was a formidable obstacle by nature, and art had turned it into a stronghold. But on the day after the capture of Florina the Servian right wing assaulted the peak from two sides, and by the evening the summit lay in their hands. The Bulgars were flung back to a lower spur, and there maintained themselves for a whole week, when, after a vigorous attempt to recover the main height, they abandoned the whole. The Allies now lay in the plain looking towards Monastir. The city lay in the depression between two hummocks of hills. On the right, the river



Cerna threw its coil about one which was cut up by a central fissure, and on the left lay a more serrated and higher mass. On the lower level, in the centre of a plain, the white minarets of Monastir could be seen, and the avenue of direct advance had been carefully and elaborately entrenched in front of the village of Kenali. The capture of the city beyond was therefore a formidable undertaking.

The Allies made preparations for a frontal attack. The guns were brought forward as soon as the railway and road were in a fit state for their movement; shell was accumulated; and in the meantime the Serbs attacked the first obstacle on their



The District about Monastir.

front—the Cerna River. They contrived, in the first week of October, to seize a crossing of the river; but it was but a precarious avenue for operations, and it was not until the 8th that they were in secure possession of the village of Skochivir, over the eastern loop of the river.

In the meantime the British had again raided the villages on the eastern bank of the Struma. Much loss was inflicted upon the enemy in these operations, but they were only designed to be the preliminaries to a distinct advance in force. On the night of 29th September the infantry crossed the Orlyak bridge, and on the follow-

ing morning the Gloucesters and Cameron Highlanders seized the village of Karadjakoi Bala, and added to it during the day, with the assistance of the Royal Scots and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the neighbouring village of Zir. In spite of all counter-attacks they consolidated their hold, and by 3rd October had captured the important village of Yenikoi, on the Seres road. Several very threatening counter-attacks were beaten off, and the British had extended their line to within a mile of the Demir Hissar railway by the time the Serbs had taken Skochivir. In these few days the enemy had suffered severely, and 1,500 corpses were buried by the British near the villages they had captured.

The preparations for assaulting the entrenchments about Kenali were now thought to be complete. After an artillery preparation, the French infantry went forward on 14th October with great gallantry, but were met with a withering fire. The wire defences had not been cut in many places, and the enemy, well provided with machine guns, wrought great havoc in the assaulting troops. They were compelled to withdraw, after suffering heavy loss; and although the attempt to force the defences was continued on the following day, it achieved no greater success. The frontal attack had proved a failure. From the mountain ridges on both sides of the trenches in the plain a galling fire swept across the approach, and the handicaps of such an advance were clear, as indeed they should have been from the first.

Clearly it would have been better if the lines could have been breached frontally, for much time and many lives would have been saved thereby; but when the entrenched system was studied on the spot, and by aerial reconnaissance, it should have been seen that the plan which had now to be adopted was the safer, and in the long run the more economical. Lying in the plains with a good field of fire, commanded by the guns behind the mountain passes east and west, the Kenali fortified system was much more formidable than the mountains upon which it rested. The mountains on the west were both higher and more serrated than those on the east, and this indicated the safest and surest avenue of approach. General Sarraill rapidly transferred Russians and French from his left, and put them under the orders of Marshal Misitch.

In the loop of the Cerna River the mountains were ranged in two irregular masses—one a narrow ridge, with the village of Polog lying on its western edge in the floor of a ravine; the other a broader crest, with the village of Veliselo on a lower level. The narrow ridge on the east is known as "The Chuke," and has the village of Skochivir at its foot; the broader mass on the west has the village of Brod resting on its lowest slopes. Each of these villages, covering a crossing of the Cerna, was already in the hands of the Serbs when the Allies began their preparations for the second advance upon Monastir. In the western mass there were eminences which looked upon the reverse of the entrenchments in the plain from a commanding height, and in this way they became the key to the whole operation. But any one established upon the eastern crest could make the western untenable, and hence the way of the Allies was clear.

Exactly two months from the opening of the offensive by the British, the Serbs were ready to begin the assault of the dominating ridges. The guns had been laboriously brought across, shell had been concentrated, and all lay ready for the advance. The Chuke was a difficult mass to scale and carry. It was deeply pitted and hollowed, and in the depressions the bush made splendid cover for artillery. Its eminences, moreover, rose into sharp razor-like edges. The western ridge being opener, though



higher, fell with the Chuke, though the Chuke would have been able to resist if its western partner had fallen. By the evening of the first day of the assault, the 10th November, the Serbs had carried the ridge and captured Polog. They had followed the usual artillery preparation, and carried all before them. So complete was their success and so unexpected, the Bulgars were unable to remove all their guns, and a number fell into Servian hands. They overran the whole of the ridge to a point more than halfway up the ravine. On Sunday, 12th November, they advanced farther, and compelled the enemy to withdraw his left flank. The position at Kenali was now in a salient. Even the enemy's footing upon the western ridge was considerably south of the Serb right wing.

The following day the Serbs, with a French contingent, forced their way up the bulk of the western ridge. On Tuesday, the 14th, a general attack was delivered from Kenali to the Cerna while the troops swept over the summit of the western ridge and took the village of Tepovtsi. The entrenched lines in front of Monastir were no longer tenable. From the positions now won the Allies were able to observe them in rear, and could mount their guns to enfilade any troops standing there from comparatively short range. The Allied guns were at once brought forward, and some of them were already on that day pouring shell upon the reverse of the lines, while the right wing was entering Chegel. At the same time Italians, Russians, and French were hammering at the front of the entrenched system. But the enemy had seen his peril and had provided for it. Only a thin rearguard held the lines on Tuesday, and on the following morning even this had been withdrawn. No troops could hold a position under such conditions, and they would have been annihilated if they had not been removed.

Rapidly the lines were crossed, and Russians and French hurried after the enemy, who had taken up a position farther north on the line of the Bistritza River. Some seven or eight miles intervened, and behind the river, about two miles, stood Monastir. But there was no serious opposition on the Bistritza. The enemy had staked all upon the Kenali position, and the Allies seemed unable to arrest his retreat even the hills. By Friday night, 17th November, the Serbs had captured practically the whole of the vast crumple of mountains which lie in the bend of the Cerna River. They had taken Hills 1,212 and 1,378, and were north of Monastir, with freedom of observation of all the ground up to the city. The Bistritza line was tenable only until the Allies could mount their guns in the new positions. Even Monastir was not safe, and the Allied guns could command the northern exit from the city and cut off the retreat. Then, again, it would be a case of retreat or annihilation. It was this consideration which impelled a German general to put himself at the head of a regiment, and charge with them in an attempt to recapture the commanding peak. It was of no avail. The general was decorated, since this spectacular war appealed to the Kaiser. But the Serbs were for the moment irresistible.

On Saturday night the enemy, realising the hopelessness of the position, marched out of the city. The Bulgars had asked time and again for reinforcements; but the Rumanian campaign was at a critical point. Falkenhayn had at length forced his way through the mountain barrier, and was approaching Craiova. No troops could be sent to Monastir at the moment, and hence the city was evacuated. Monastir was not militarily of great importance; but it stood to Bulgaria much as Constantinople stood to the Russians, although Russia did not enter the war to gain the key to the Dardanelles as the Bulgars certainly did to gain Western Macedonia, which

they had lost in the Second Balkan War. Not a single place in the world-wide field of the war had a similar emotional and political importance to any other belligerent, and hence the fall of Monastir was a unique calamity.

Of the 4,600 prisoners taken, 1,000 were Germans, and, as we have seen, there were numerous Germans on the British front. There the pressure had been incessantly maintained, and the British in this way contributed their share to the capture of Monastir. They had inflicted heavy loss on the enemy, and the city had only been evacuated because reserves were refused. Yet many days had not passed before a German division and a Bulgar division *had* to be sent to rally the retreating army and arrest the retirement towards Prilep.

At three o'clock on the Sunday morning fires were observed in Monastir; and these being reported, it became clear that something was afoot, and patrols were sent into the enemy trenches south of the city. In an hour the French and Russians were in these trenches, as it was found they had been evacuated. There they remained until after seven o'clock, when the patrols reported that the city had been left by the enemy. The Russians and French began to advance. Riding with the divisional cavalry advance guard, Lieutenant Murat, a descendant of Napoleon's general, entered the southern fringes of the town as the enemy were leaving by the north, and made a spirited but ineffectual attempt to cut off the last enemy battery. The French cavalry were met with cheers, and flowers were thrown on them as they galloped through the city and out towards the north of the Prilep road.

Such was the first Allied entry into the city; but the Serbs were not much later. They sent detachments over the mountains in the Cerna bend to Novak, and thence by road they entered the city. This bone of contention was theirs once more. The Bulgars were in full retreat, and but for the weariness of the Allied troops and the threat from the rear they could have been pushed north of Prilep. As they realised the state of affairs, they began to entrench themselves in the hills overlooking Monastir, and were able to make the city almost uninhabitable.

### VIII. THE OCCUPATION OF THESSALY.

AT the fall of Monastir the enemy was obviously discouraged, and with a little more force the Allies might have revolutionised the war in the Near East, and perhaps have saved Rumania. The retreating troops expected some such sequel, and regained courage as the pursuit did not materialise. That it did not do so must be accounted one of the services King Constantine rendered the enemy. The King was thoroughly pro-German in his sympathies. He had got his military training in the German Guard, and the foundation of his policy may be summed up in a sentence of his quoted by Mr. Ward Price: "The Germans may not win, but they cannot be beaten in a hundred years." He saw the Allied diplomatists make almost every mistake possible. He witnessed the costly failure of the Dardanelles campaign, which he had prophesied would fail. He sincerely felt that, since the Germans were winning, the interests of his country demanded that it should at least remain neutral. He was obstinate, and had the German idea of his position. To Venizelos he said: "I am content to leave the national affairs of my country to my Government, but for its foreign relations I hold myself responsible to God alone." So Constantine



kept out of the war, while secretly helping the Germans by every means in his power. His countrymen made money out of supplying the German submarines with petrol, and they carried information from the German Ambassador or other German agents.

This state of things, which had issued in the overthrow of Venizelos, despite his constitutional mandate, at length caused that statesman to leave Athens. With Admiral Condouriotis and General Danglis, he stealthily left the capital on 25th September; and after visiting the Greek islands, he settled on 9th October in the King's villa in Salonika, and there founded the Provisional Government, not yet hostile to the King. A demand was made about this time for the surrender of ten batteries as a compensation for those surrendered to Germany; but as it was not complied with, French and British detachments were landed on 1st December, and, in spite of assurances from the King, were ambushed and suffered heavy casualties. The French alone had eighty-three men killed. The cowardly and treacherous assault caused wild enthusiasm amid the King's supporters, and many of the Venizelists were shot and many assaulted. Venizelos now renounced his allegiance to the King, and in the following month his Government received formal recognition from Britain and France. But meanwhile the development of the Monastir success had been ruined irrevocably. The threatening state of affairs in Athens had not allowed General Sarrail to put his whole heart into the offensive, and now it had to be checked definitely. The King was reprimanded by the Allies, and a formal *amende* had to be made to the Allied flags. Moreover, the Allies demanded that the Greek army should be removed from Thessaly, where it lay dangerously near the Allied communications to the south of the Corinth Canal. The Greek troops had moved north through Thessaly towards the loop of the railway at Verria, and Sarrail had to cover his vulnerable flank by withdrawing some French detachments. In order to bring pressure upon the King, the Allies blockaded Greece; but there was sufficient food in the country, and the harvests of Thessaly were ripening and would make Greece still more independent.

It seemed impossible to hope that the Allies would take the obvious course and clear Thessaly. The harvest was there, and would have been useful to the Allies; but until May no decision was formed. Even then it was six weeks before the Allied commander was empowered to take action. A number of mixed detachments were moved towards the old Grecian frontier in May, and on 10th June infantry, cavalry, and artillery with armoured cars were sent southwards to the Sarandaporon Pass, which lies at the threshold of Old Greece. The force involved was two divisions of infantry (one acting in reserve at Ekaterinai), four regiments of cavalry, field artillery, and some six-inch guns. But the force included Spahis, Chasseurs d'Afrique, Russians, Annamites, Zouaves, colonial infantry, and half a battalion of East Yorks. The column directed to the Sarandaporon Pass went through the gateway of Old Greece, rested at Elassona, passed through Tyrnavo during the night, and came thence through the plain to the bridge across the river beyond which lies Larissa. There General Bayeras, the commander of the Larissa garrison, met the commander of the Allied force, General Venel. It was the same soldier who had surrendered Fort Rupel to the Bulgars a year before. He proposed to General Venel that Larissa should be occupied jointly by the French and Greek troops; but was informed that this was impossible, and that he must consider himself as a prisoner. A French officer was put into his motor car, and after a little further conversation he drove off to the town. Colonel de Fourtou followed, in order to receive the surrender of the

Greek officer. The town was full of armed reservists in civilian clothes when the French officer arrived, and the Greek officers were ready for flight. General Bayeras spoke to his officers, and then drove away. The Greek officers made constant delays about handing over their swords. Mr. Ward Price well describes this episode. Colonel de Fourtou demanded the swords, and to all replies calmly retorted, "Eh bien, encore dix minutes. Après dix minutes, je m'en vais, c'est la guerre." The colonel was about to enter his car at the end of ten minutes when suddenly the cause of the delay became clear. A battalion of Evzones was escaping across the cornfields at the back of the barracks. The Spahis were ordered up and swept forward, swords drawn, like a cloud, and began to hunt through the cornfields. Soon shots were heard. The colonel, with five or six French officers and a handful of troopers, were left facing the forty Greek officers and a hundred men. The armoured cars were sent for, and readjusted the balance of power. The resistance in the cornfield was soon overcome, and the town was occupied. Then followed Volo. Other towns were occupied at the same time by the other detachments, and in ten days 30,000 concealed weapons had been discovered. General Sarrail was enthusiastically acclaimed when he visited Larissa and Volo on 20th June. The occupation of Thessaly was an accomplished fact, and the rear of the Allied army was no longer in peril. Shortly afterwards Constantine was removed from the throne. His son Alexander became king in his stead. Venizelos came back to power, and Greece joined the Allies.

## IX. THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME : THE THIRD PHASE.

At the end of the second phase of the Battle of the Somme the British were established on a front of seven miles, from Mouquet Farm to Guillemont, in the second German defensive system. Only at Mouquet Farm and High Wood had they possession of positions on a level with the top of the ridge. The capture of Guillemont had given them contact with the left wing of General Fayolle's army, which curved about Combles and turned east towards Rancourt and Bouchavesnes. General Micheler's 10th Army had just extended the front of attack by advancing from Vermandovillers to Chilly, and from Thiepval to Chaumes the Germans were now confronted by a new position.

The problem of the first two phases of the Somme battle was similar. From the capture of the first defensive system to the capture of the second was a period of growing Allied superiority. The first fortified system seemed so elaborate that the absurd boasts of the Germans had a certain justification. "They (the Allies) will bite granite." "The steel walls are impregnable." These were the sort of boasts that the cunning ingenuity of the German engineers seemed to make feasible. But when the first system was taken, the worst was over. The second was a little less formidable, and after that the problem became new. The Allies had a preponderance of guns and ammunition, and so had accomplished the capture of the first two systems at a cost which was smaller than that of the defenders. But having achieved so much, a different problem presented itself. What is the rôle of all fortifications from the old-fashioned fort to the trench system of 1916? It is simply to economise men. Hence, when the Allies had torn a gap in these elaborate defences, they produced a condition of things under which the enemy was bound to



employ more men, and these were necessarily to be more exposed. The Germans were driven back upon largely improvised positions, to sustain there the shock of an attack they had been unable to resist on fortified systems upon which had been lavished all their ingenuity.

Their resources in man power were failing ; yet the Allied offensive reminded them as clearly as possible that unless they could bring still more men the line would disappear altogether. The German third system was merely begun at the opening of the Somme battle, and though by huge losses the enemy had purchased two months to spend upon its elaboration, the product of that time could not equal the product of two years. Before the British, it is true, stood a string of fortified villages from Courcelette to Morval, but these lay over the ridge and were largely under observation. And there was a further position just west of Bapaume. Since the opening of the struggle, sixty-one German divisions—or sixty-eight if we include the seven which had been re-formed and engaged again—had been drawn into the area, and fifty-three of these had been used up. When we reflect upon the trouble connected with the transference of new divisions to the area, the numbers of changes to be brought about, the strain upon transport when this was one of the factors that was suffering most heavily, we can gather some idea of the tremendous German losses. The British losses were smaller, the French much smaller. Into the maelstrom one division after another was drawn, and the Allies noted with joy that the concentration of German batteries before Verdun was being weakened to give a little more protection to the defenders of the Somme area.

The German command had been reorganised. The 2nd Army was broken up. Part of it, the revived 1st Army, lying north of the Somme, was given to General von Below ; and a distinguished general from the Eastern front, von Gallwitz, was placed in charge of the part lying south of the Somme, which now became the 2nd Army. Over the whole area the Crown Prince of Bavaria was in command, and his own army, the 6th, was included. Oddly enough, he had begun to imitate the Allied system, first used at Verdun, of treating corps as groups, and feeding them with divisions as drafts. Over these elastic corps presided Generals von Stern, von Armin, von Quast, von Marschall, von Kuchbach, von Hugel, and von Fasbender. The German High Command had just been changed, Hindenburg succeeding Falkenhayn ; and since he was chiefly a name, his Chief of Staff, von Ludendorff, accompanied him and directed affairs.

The care given to military operations by the Germans is perhaps shown so perfectly by nothing so much as by a report made by von Armin. It was made on the demand of the Staff, who wished for an impartial account of the Somme offensive during July. Similar reports were made about other operations. One was written to discuss the Champagne offensive in 1915, and upon the conclusions drawn as to the reasons of its failure the Verdun offensive was planned. General von Armin was commander of the 4th, or Magdeburg, Corps, which had entered Brussels in August 1914.

The document is almost unique. It is dispassionate to a degree that seems almost unreal. And it admits the breakdown of the German war machine, and, while paying tribute to the ability of the new British armies, does not hesitate to point to their faults. It commends the dash, confidence, and physique of the British infantry, and holds that, though the commanders were not yet equal to their positions when critical conditions were produced, they could consolidate positions rapidly and well. The

infantry showed great tenacity, though the Germans returned from the fights feeling they were superior. The artillery was scientifically directed, and methodically bombarded all important tactical positions. The fact that some of the British cavalry attacked unshaken infantry frontally, and had to retire with heavy loss, called forth caustic comment. But, at the same time, the General noted the weakness of every link of his own machine. More weapons, more transport, more observation, better communications were needed. The satisfaction of such demands could not be met easily, and such additional expedients must therefore be supplied to Army or General Headquarters and put at the disposal of the corps on going into battle. The strain upon the military machine broke down the normal apparatus for communication. The Corps Headquarters were made to be satisfied with one telephone between them. There were not sufficient machine guns. The Allied artillery blotted out the trench system. Men were buried in the narrow trenches with steep sides. Shallower trenches were suggested. The wire entanglements did not prove effective. Battle headquarters proved a difficulty. When situated in villages or on slopes they were made untenable. In some cases they were unfindable, as all the landmarks were blotted out. Such was the effect of the artillery fire, that a completely new system of holding the trenches had to be devised; otherwise, all the defenders were wiped out with the first trench, and hence there could be no counter-attack. More and more troops must therefore be kept in reserve.

"It was found very difficult to form a continuous barrage without gaps in front of our lines, owing to the occasional uncertainty as to the position of our front line, which was continually changing during the fighting; the frequent changing of batteries; the regrouping of the artillery, which was often necessary; the bad conditions for observation; the permanent interruption of the telephone communications; and the practically continuous heavy fire which was maintained behind our front line."

This description conveys an impression of the result of the British attack that is hard to excel. Indeed such was the effect of the artillery fire that it was suggested that the men should go forward 100-200 yards, and lie down in the open without cover. The preparation of further villages behind the line could not be begun too soon. There could not be too much work spent on the fortifications. There must be more care about definite counter-attacks, as differentiated from those local counter-attacks which are the mere apparatus of defence. In this connection, the General made an illuminating remark: "If counter-attacks which, on account of the situation, ought to be methodically prepared are hurried, *they cost much blood, and cause the troops to lose their trust in their leaders if they fail, which nearly always happens in such a case.*"

This significant statement gives an insight into one of the inevitable results of a consistent defensive. There was a reference to, and a commendation of, the new assaulting troops which the Germans had been driven to form and train for the purposes of the attack. The stress of the artillery bombardment was so great that touch was frequently lost between the German infantry and artillery. The telephone system proved totally inadequate. Relays of runners had to be formed to convey orders. The light-signalling service had to be remodelled, and the light pistols to signify the direction of required barrage fire were not sufficiently numerous. Aerial observation was insufficient. "The numerical superiority of the enemy's airmen, and the fact that their machines were better, were made disagreeably apparent to us, particularly in their direction of the enemy's artillery fire and in bomb-dropping."



A suggestion was made that the sound signals of the English aeroplane observers be imitated. There were insufficient battleplanes. "The enemy's airmen were often able to fire successfully on our troops with machine guns by descending to a height of a few hundred metres." These tactics made it impossible for German anti-aircraft guns to be used against the attackers, for fear of hitting the German troops with splinters.

A suggestion was made that the English breech-cover for rifles be imitated to prevent the rifles becoming clogged with dust. The weight of the machine guns caused delay and consequent loss of life in getting them through a barrage. "The hand grenade was the most important infantry weapon both in attack and defence." The field guns got worn out and cartridges jammed. The average daily expenditure of ammunition is worth record. Field guns (per gun), 145 rounds; light field howitzers, 170 rounds; heavy field howitzers, 119 rounds; 10 cm. guns, 118 rounds; (21 cm.) mortars, 51 rounds. More field-gun ammunition would apparently have been used but for the fact that the supplies were short. "Instructions had to be issued to the troops to be economical with field-gun shell." The highest daily average for field guns was 322 rounds; light field howitzers, 479 rounds; heavy field howitzers, 233 rounds; 10 cm. guns, 321 rounds; (21 cm.) mortars, 116 rounds. "The supply of ammunition of all kinds during the first days of the battle did not equal the great expenditure." And on one attack ammunition had to be borrowed from a neighbouring group. The maps proved insufficient and not sufficiently detailed. Trains could only run into Bapaume during the night owing to the accurate artillery fire.

In fine, we may sum up this testimony of General von Armin in a word. The German military machine faltered and failed at its first real test. Communications were knocked to bits. The British, in the air and in artillery, had clearly gained a superiority; and though, as the General pointed out, they were not sufficiently skilled to make the most of their opportunities, they had begun to prove themselves apt pupils. One remark of the General seems to be contradicted by another. The British when they became isolated readily surrendered. This was clearly only an exception. For he himself says that when they seized a position it was very difficult to drive them out. And it is also difficult to understand how the German infantry came out with the conviction that they were the better when he confesses that they frequently lost *moral* through their failure to redress the situation in a counter-attack.

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The junction of the Allied armies was about Combles, which already lay in a sort of V curve of the line. It had been decided that the fortified place should be carried by the two armies encircling it from opposite sides. But the Kaiser had ordered the Germans to hold it to the end, and it was clear that sooner or later the Allies would attack in force. Sir Douglas Haig did not intend to make the capture of Combles a separate operation. His plan was to advance beyond the town until it fell into his hands as an inevitable consequence. The opening of the third phase of the Battle of the Somme may be said to have begun on 12th September, when the whole front from Thiepval to Ginchy came under a heavy bombardment. The fourth great battle was to be fought; and Gough and Rawlinson had between them twelve divisions. The Canadians of Byng's corps were destined for the attack upon Courcellette. On their right the 15th Highland Division had Martinpuich as

its objective. High Wood, farther east, was to be captured by the London (47th Division) and Northumbrian Territorials (50th Division). Flers was to be the prey of the New Zealanders. The outskirts of Delville Wood had to be crossed by two New Army divisions. The Guards, the 6th Regular Division, and the 56th London Territorial Division were to advance against Les Bœufs and Morval. The Territorials acted as flank guard on the right, and had Bouleaux Wood for their objective. These three divisions formed the 14th Corps, under Lord Cavan, and replaced the 13th Corps of General Congreve, which had been withdrawn.

It is obvious that such an advance would squeeze Combles into a pocket in which resistance would be hopeless. The New Zealanders were making their first acquaintance with the fighting on the Western front. The battle was to be further assisted by a new fighting instrument, the "tanks," which bore the ambiguous title of "Machine Gun Corps, Heavy Section."

The battle opened by a feint attack of a brigade of the 5th Army. These troops, on the night of Thursday, 14th September, captured the Hohenzollern trench and Wunderwerk Redoubt, to the south of Thiepval, with little loss, and took a number of prisoners. The success was important, and the Germans at once launched a counter-attack. About six o'clock in the morning of the 15th the bombardment worked up to that terrible intensity in which hardly anything can live, and twenty minutes later the troops moved to the advance behind their barrage. The German counter-attack below Thiepval was just launched; the Canadians met it with a fierce fire, and then profited by the resulting disorganisation. Courcellette was in their hands by the afternoon. Martinpuich fell to the Scots by a brilliantly conducted attack. High Wood caused the London Territorials heavy losses, but it fell to them in the afternoon. The New Zealanders had little trouble with Flers. So far, the battle had gone according to schedule; but on the right, where so much more than the immediate objectives was at stake, the Guards and Regulars made very little headway. The front was carried eastward over the Flers-Ginchy road; but the advance to the north-east was held up by a work called the Quadrilateral, which commanded the approach to Morval. It was placed in a bend and dip of the road, and, covered with woods and bristling with machine guns, it held up the 6th Division, and so wrecked the whole plan of the right wing. The main part of the British plan had, then, miscarried; but the day had been the best British success since the beginning of the war. Between four and five thousand prisoners were taken, and the troops advanced over a six-mile front for an average distance of a mile over the ridge between Thiepval and Combles.

Part of the success was due to the appearance of the tanks. Their secret had been well kept. For a few weeks the Germans had known that some new instrument was to be used against them, but they did not know what it was. Even the British troops were nonplussed and helpless with laughter when the tanks made their appearance on the battlefield. They were in principle moving forts. Their armour was sufficient to bid defiance to machine guns, and also to wire and irregularities of the ground. They made use of caterpillar wheels, and, looking like some immense prehistoric animal, rolled forward remorselessly over trenches, redoubts, walls, and wire. Standing astride a trench, they would riddle its occupants with bullets. Twenty-four were sent across the German lines on this day; but seven did not long survive. Of the others, one moved up through Flers village in advance of the New Zealanders. Another crushed the resistance at the sugar



factory at Courcellette. Some of them were attacked by the Germans when they stuck on the ground, and their crews enjoyed the sensation of being cooped up in a constricted and unwholesome space while bullets were rained on their outer skin. The tanks proved a great success, and it is interesting to remember that they were a British and not a German discovery. After they had made their bow to the world, some amusing references to them appeared in the German press. They were really a German invention, so it was said, and the Germans would have used them if they had been sufficiently useful. In fact, the Germans, who had invoked scientific and mechanical genius in the war, felt the new expedient to be a sort of reflection upon themselves.

The crews of the monsters called their engines by fanciful names. One was "Crème de Menthe," and it was this which assisted at the capture of Courcellette. The moral effect on the Germans was striking. Men were terrorised, and loudly called for mercy. A colonel peeped out at one and called "Kamerad!" with his hands high in the air. "Come inside then," said a voice, and a hand reached out and dragged him within. There can be no doubt that the tanks triumphantly justified their use. Before the war ended it was realised that they were the key to success in the modern positional warfare.

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General Fayolle was going methodically forward. Bouchavesnes, on the Baupême-Péronne road, with over 2,000 prisoners, had fallen into his hands in the second day of the British bombardment. On the 14th the French moved nearer Combles, capturing Le Priez Farm to the south-east on the Combles-Rancourt road; and on the 17th and 18th the French army cleared the outskirts of Vermandovillers and Berny, and captured Dénicourt. The Quadrilateral was on this day isolated and captured, and the Regulars advanced towards Morval. Meanwhile, the Germans were vainly beating against the new Allied fronts in repeated counter-attacks.

The battle was resumed between the Somme and Martinpuich on Monday, 25th September.\* The guns began the day before to bombard Grandcourt, Les Bœufs, and Morval; and when the troops moved to the advance after noon on Monday, they secured immediate successes of the highest importance. Only on the left were the British held up. Grandcourt was entered, but had to be evacuated owing to the check of a brigade on its flank. Les Bœufs fell to the Guards, and Morval to the Regulars. The capture of this village was most important. The British line now ran south of Bouleaux Wood round Morval, and as the French had captured Rancourt, Combles was left in a V-shaped pocket between the two. From Morval, moreover, the British looked down upon it. On the following day Grandcourt was captured; the French captured Frégicourt, and Combles was abandoned to the Allies. It was honeycombed with defensive works, and much material was left behind; but only a handful of prisoners was taken. The decision to evacuate Combles was wise; but it was one of the most ignominious incidents that had happened to the Germans in the Battle of the Somme. Behind it lay a vast confession of impotence. The town was entered before daybreak by the British and French from opposite sides. The British patrols of weary men entered the town cautiously, and paused when they reached the railway lines. Through the darkness figures were discerned approaching them. The officers met, and the position was revealed. The town was empty.

\* "The heaviest of the many heavy engagements." [Ludendorff, *My Memories*, p. 276.]

But on the British left another and a greater success had been achieved this day. Thiepval was captured, all but the north-west corner, and that was taken on the following day (27th). The place stood upon a ridge, and was regarded by the Germans as impregnable. In the end the loss attending the capture was but slight. The position had been undermined by the capture of Mouquet Farm, and although the British had withdrawn from this ground owing to the surprising appearance of Germans from somewhere in their rear, Thiepval was doomed. Like Mouquet Farm, it was an underground fortress. Above ground there was nothing to see but a number of black and broken tree trunks. Vaults and tunnels below ground sheltered the defenders. As the bombardment had grown in intensity they had delved deeper, made more intricate connections between the tunnels, and constructed exits at various points. For two years the 180th German Regiment had held the fortress, and they were left in charge during the Somme battle. They had sworn to defend the place to the death. On the left the walls of the old château were in ruins; but the Germans were waiting in the cellars, and emerged on the approach of the infantry and met them with a heavy machine-gun fire. But a tank soon rolled up in its uneasy way, and sitting astride the trench below the château, put an end to resistance there. Thiepval, however, had still to be won. The men from the underground warrens were smoked out, bombed out, and bayoneted out; and it was risky work going down into the tunnels. But at length the fortress was cleared. Many of the Germans fought until the end. Nine hundred and ninety-eight unwounded men were taken prisoner, and there were also forty wounded men. The capture of the fortress on the heights had been a formidable task. It was the pivot of the German defence, and its capture by the 12th Middlesex and 10th Essex had something of the magic of the first victories in the Battle of the Somme.

The end of September found the outlook bright with hopes of a decisive success. The advantage in observation had been captured; the advantage in the air had not been lost; and in artillery and men the Allies were superior. But unfortunately the weather now broke and imposed a new rhythm upon the operations. In rainy weather the whole of the broken ground of the Somme became a heavy mud. Shells had torn the ground this way and that, and the water converted the soil into a thick paste. Across this horrible swamp had to be brought all the endless supplies of a great army. In places the artillery literally disappeared, and horses were engulfed and had to be shot. Yet hardly a day passed in October that the British positions were not improved and prisoners taken. But the decisive action that would have given strategic results could not be carried out. It was as when a boxer reels and needs little to put him out of the fight, but the assailant is forced to keep at arm's length while his victim is regaining strength.

The ruined French monastery, Eaucourt l'Abbaye, was seized by the 141st Brigade on the first day of the month, largely by the help of two tanks. The next day the Bavarians had secured a foothold in the ruins once more. For two days more the battle swayed, and it was not till the morning of the 4th that the position was finally taken. But when the small British garrison had installed themselves beyond the ruins, they seemed like to starve; for the ground was bogged, and food could not reach them. Luckily their comrades on the right came to the rescue, and gave them of their own supplies. A few days later—on the 7th—an attack on a seven-mile front gave the British possession of Le Sars and several important neighbouring positions around Thiepval.



All but the corner of Schwaben Redoubt had been seized on the last day of September. But the Schwaben Redoubt represented one of the most important places in the Somme area. It was now the northern pivot of the German line, and if it fell the way would be open to develop the success towards the Ancre. Hence it was that, in the next three weeks, eleven German counter-attacks were made to recover the redoubt, while the British were struggling to complete its capture. "Men are to be informed," ran a captured German order, "by their immediate superiors that this attack is not merely a matter of retaking a trench because it was formerly in German possession, but that the capture of an extremely important point is involved. If the enemy remains on the ridge, he can blow our artillery in the Ancre valley to pieces, and the protection of the infantry will then be destroyed." On the 21st October, in a passing return of fine weather, the German counter-attack came. It was broken by fire, and immediately recoiled. And then a heavy British attack cleared the whole of the redoubt, took the Stuff and Regina trenches, captured 1,100 prisoners out of a total casualty list of 1,200, and seized the observation positions over the Ancre valley.

Meanwhile the French had advanced eastward and pushed their line out south of the Somme. They pressed forward a little nearer Péronne, capturing La Maisonnette. Heavy counter-attacks were delivered on the French positions there, and towards the end of the month the Germans were again in the village. But by this time Fayolle's troops had captured the T-shaped village of Saily Saillisel. The main objective in this quarter was Mont St. Quentin, which covered Péronne from the north, and supported the line as far south as Villers Carbonnel. The hill lies in an angle of the Tortille stream, about 200 feet above the sea level. A ridge about fifty feet higher gave it flank cover to the north, and this ridge was masked by St. Pierre Vaast Wood, below Saily Saillisel. If the village fell, sooner or later the wood must fall. Saily Saillisel became a sort of outwork of Mont St. Quentin, and the struggle for its possession occupied over a month. In the first week of October the French were already in the western houses; by the 16th they were at the cross-roads; but the whole of the village was not in French hands until 12th November. A little island of houses in the midst of the place was last to be reduced. With the capture of the village, the French got a hold on the wood and maintained and extended their holding.

Micheler's army had by this time achieved another significant success. In the second week of October he had seized the western outskirts of Ablaincourt, and taken part of the wood north of Chaulnes with 1,300 prisoners. On 15th October he leaped forward again toward Belloy, which stands to Villers Carbonnel somewhat as Saily Saillisel to Mont St. Quentin. The Villers ridge sheltered the guns south of Péronne, which by their protective fire held the front in position. In the first week of November Micheler secured the whole of the villages of Ablaincourt and Pressoire with over 500 prisoners. By this success the French had gone a step nearer to the position from which they would have observation of the guns behind Villers ridge from the south.

At this point we may consider the third phase of the great battle at an end. It had passed the critical point, and failed to yield the expected results. It had not even prevented Hindenburg restoring the Russian front and giving Falkenhayn some thirty\* divisions to fling against Rumania. At the end of the first week in

\* Not all or the majority from the Western front, not all even German; but nevertheless the divisions were collected and allocated to a part of Europe far from the scene of the Somme battle.

October the Germans were badly shaken by the prolonged strain and heavy loss. They still possessed a system of trenches covering the villages of Le Transloy and Beaulencourt and the town of Bapaume; "but although he was digging with feverish haste, he had not yet been able to create any formidable defences behind this line. In this direction, in fact, we had at last reached a stage at which a successful attack might reasonably be expected to yield much greater results than anything we had yet attained. The resistance of the troops opposed to us had seriously weakened in the course of our recent operations, and there was no reason to suppose that the effort required would not be within our powers." The words are those of Sir Douglas Haig, and they suggest speculations into which it is useless now to enter; for "at this juncture very unfavourable weather set in, and continued with scarcely a break during the remainder of October and the early part of November. Poor visibility seriously interfered with the work of our artillery, and constant rain turned the mass of hastily dug trenches for which we were fighting into channels of deep mud."

The Germans, in fact, had achieved their end in imposing such a delay that, at the critical moment, the season had intervened and made a great advance impossible. If we are compelled to admire the splendid spirit of those new soldiers who had fought until their enemy was almost in extremities, we must not refuse our respect for the cool skill and courage of the German command, who had cheated the Allies of a possibly decisive victory. Three weeks or a fortnight of good weather might have won it; but the German troops, by their steadfast defence, had fought out these weeks till the weather broke.

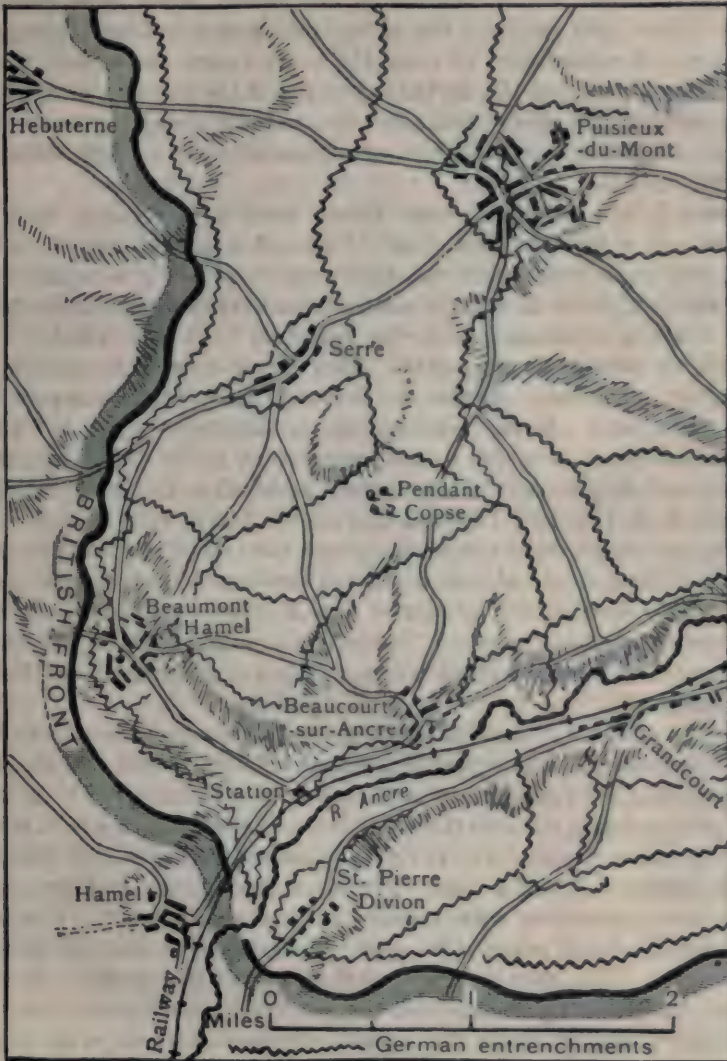
#### X. THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME: THE FOURTH PHASE.— THE BATTLE OF THE ANCRE.

THE weather, which had unexpectedly broken in October, was expected to fail a little later, and the British saw that they must make the most of their opportunities. The achievement already was great, but it was necessary it should be made greater. The area of attack must be widened, and that could only be done by reducing part of the line to the north which had resisted the attack in July. From Hebuterne to a mile below St. Pierre Divion, the German line was the thick skin over which the Germans had lavished their care for two years. The villages of Beaumont Hamel and Serre were perched upon crests covered with redoubts, tunnelled and burrowed into underground halls where great numbers of men could lie secure. Into some of the slopes catacombs had been bored. These had been improved and linked up. Thick banks of barbed wire showed their rusty exterior to the British lines. The Germans regarded the positions as impregnable; but they had thought the same of so many other positions which had fallen to the Allies.

Yet to a great extent the problem had been changed in favour of the assailants. When the British attacked in July they had to attack frontally; and they were learning their lesson. Although Armin spoke of the improvement in the infantry since the Battle of Loos, it was slight compared with the improvement during the Somme battle. The co-operation between artillery and infantry had been developed to a high pitch of excellence. The co-ordinated use of the airmen had also been



improved. The new armies had been trained to walk behind the barrage steadily as it crept forward over the German lines. And, moreover, the artillery was now able to shell Beaumont Hamel and St. Pierre Divion from a wide arc. From the Thiepval ridge the rear of Beaumont could be shelled; and this bombardment from flank and rear is the most efficient instrument in attack. The northern bank



Battle of the Somme: the British Line north of Thiepval on November 13.

of the Ancre is similar in structure to the northern bank of the Aisne, sloping upwards with deep fissures cut into it. A ridge runs up from it, having Beaucourt on its southern face and Serre on its north-western extremity. The road from Beaucourt to Beaumont Hamel rests in a hollow, south-west of the spur upon which the latter village stands.

Sir Hubert Gough's 5th Army lay on the front which included these positions. Between Gommecourt and Serre lay the 31st Division. Facing Serre were the 3rd and 2nd Regular Divisions, with some of the heroes of Mons still in their ranks. These three divisions formed Fanshawe's 5th Corps. The 51st Highland Division of Territorials faced Beaumont Hamel and the Y ravine. On their right was the (63rd) Naval Division, which had had a checkered career from Belgium to the Dardanelles. The 39th Division lay across the Ancre, looking towards St. Pierre Divion. After a bombardment of some thirty-six hours, the assault was launched on a front of 8,000 yards, in the darkness and fog of the morning of 13th November. The British south of the Ancre had the advantage of advancing towards a flooded river course; and it is ever the greatest embarrassment to fight with one's back to a full river.

But to attack in a dense fog, when almost everything depends upon the troops keeping touch, is a most perilous task. Old and seasoned troops can hardly be expected to keep their positions in the dark; and when this is complicated by banks of impenetrable fog, it would seem almost a miracle that touch should be preserved perfectly. Yet the commanders on the spot had to decide whether to abandon the attack or to adhere to their plan. They chose to attack, and their decision was justified by the success. Before the Germans knew what to expect they found the British upon them. Serre, however, was not captured. The 3rd Division had not there the benefit of cross-fire to the same extent as the troops assaulting Beaumont Hamel, and they found the wire uncut, and had to fall back with heavy loss. On the other flank the 39th Division carried St. Pierre Divion well before noon. Indeed, such was the speed of the advance that the troops suffered much from their own barrage. Their total casualties did not amount to more than 600, and yet they took 1,400 prisoners and advanced over a mile. But in between these two flanks a different drama was played. The troops secured successes, but after thrilling encounters; and their achievement was not only the most contested but, in effect, the most important.

The honours of the day went to the Highland Territorial Division and the Naval Division. The former had to attack Beaumont Hamel; but it had first to reach it, and the approaches were guarded by a strong natural feature, the Y ravine. The Y lay with its prongs facing towards the south-west, the tail running back slightly north of due east to Station Road. The ravine was narrow and at places thirty feet deep. In length it approached half a mile. The German dug-outs had openings into the ravine sides and connecting with tunnels and caverns beyond. The Scots swept over the first three lines, swept right past the Y ravine onward towards the Beaumont-Serre road. They then went down the sides of the ravine. The fighting in this position baffles description. On many occasions sandwiches of Scots and Germans wrestled and strove in the constricted space, and the scale was apt to be turned in a moment by the emergence of Germans, in front or behind, from hidden dug-outs. Bodies of men were prisoners and captors many times over before the struggle approached a decision. The tail of the Y was occupied before noon by the British; but the Germans still lay to the west in the prongs. Then another assault was made from the west, and after that the work became simpler. Prisoners were evacuated and the dug-outs cleared by bombers. In the midst of the fighting vast stores were tapped, and the men began to smoke as they went about their business. Some of them found time to change their underclothing when a large supply of spare



shirts was found. But at the end of the day the Scots had passed beyond Beaumont Hamel, and lay on the Munich trench beyond. They had taken 1,400 prisoners and about 60 machine guns; but their storming of Beaumont Hamel, which was reputed an even stronger fortress than Thiepval, was an unforgettable achievement, and was due to sheer fighting quality. It is difficult to conceive of a more formidable position than that which the Germans had created there; but its boasted strength was stolen by a body of men who two years—many even a year—before had been civilians.

The Naval Division accomplished a difficult feat, owing very largely to the extraordinary daring and ability of the Hood battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Freyberg. He had been fighting in Mexico at the outbreak of the war, and returned to England and joined the Naval Division. He conducted by himself a feint attack in the Gulf of Saros on the night of April 24, 1915, and was granted the D.S.O.; and for his achievement on the present occasion was awarded the V.C. About 8.30 in the morning it was found that though the men had carried the first two trenches, they could go no farther owing to a strong redoubt in their centre. The left was held up also by fire from the hills beyond Beaumont. Isolated parties had got through to Station Road, but the position looked desperate when a pigeon brought a message that Freyberg had got along by the river and was outside Beaucourt. He had gathered odd parties and forced his way a mile deep into the enemy's position. He was reinforced by the Honourable Artillery Company, and another attempt was made to reduce the obdurate redoubt. No success was obtained, and it was not until a tank made its way thither that the garrison surrendered. Early next morning Freyberg assisted at the capture of Beaucourt by storm. Three times wounded, he led the assaulting party; and even when he had received another wound, he refused to abandon his command until he had carefully organised the position.

Of the numerous incidents in the battle the bulk must pass unrecorded. But a word may be found for the seventeen men of the Dublin Fusiliers who pressed forward with their chaplain to the slopes east of Beaumont and captured 400 Germans. They marshalled them with care, and then marched them through a double barrage to the British lines. By such deeds did the troops prove their quality, and justify the great success of their battle.

On the evening of the second day of the offensive the total of prisoners had reached 5,000—a record capture for the time. The determined counter-attack on the 15th November failed to recover the lost ground, and the next day a further advance was made towards Grandcourt. Two days later the Canadians advanced from Regina trench and carried their line nearer Grandcourt. Another 752 prisoners were taken. But it was the end of the Battle of the Somme.

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Writing even at the distance of four years, it is still difficult correctly to appreciate the battle. It was much more decisive than was realised at the time. The German press began to announce that the battle was over, and that, just as Verdun was a French victory, so the Somme battle was a German victory. It is interesting to notice this confession. But the events of the following February and March added another commentary to the Somme battle. When Hindenburg made his great retreat from the Somme area, he confessed to the world that the Allies had won a partial victory. One of the objects of the Allies was to cause a great retreat. They

had bitten deep into the German lines and produced salients north and south. Much speculation as to the tenableness of these positions was ended by the great German withdrawal between Arras and Soissons. Hindenburg confessed still more. He admitted that the Allied tactics had proved too much for him, and that alike strategically and tactically he was outmatched. The Allies had produced a great line over which the Germans had to rely upon improvised positions instead of the old elaborate entrenchments. But if they were beaten out of the latter with immense loss, what would befall them when left to sustain the same shock upon improvised positions? The Germans were wise enough to abandon them.

The Battle of the Somme, then, is certain to rank as one of the great battles of history. It was greater than Verdun for the number of men engaged and for its strategic bearing upon the war as a whole. Though the Germans were able to conduct a campaign in Rumania, they were compelled to increase their force on the Western front, and more and more of this had been involved in the inferno of the Somme, until of the 127 divisions concentrated there, ninety had been in the battle. This point was especially noted by Sir Douglas Haig. A full half of all the German divisions in the field had been beaten, and when the battle was resumed again, it would begin with that fact behind it. Fifteen divisions had held the battle line in July; forty were engaged on the same front in November. Moreover, Verdun had been relieved, and when the Somme battle began it was near its fall. Further, the French successes at Verdun showed how much the Germans had been compelled to withdraw from that area.

The German losses were put at 720,000. A captured order showed the German concern at the loss of so many junior officers. The British losses were estimated at about 420,000, and the French at about 250,000. The excess of the German casualties was not great. It is indeed possible there was no excess at all. But, as we have seen, it does not represent the whole of the balance sheet. The British took 38,000 prisoners, and captured 29 heavy guns, 96 field guns, 136 trench mortars, and 514 machine guns. They rightly had the elation of victory. They felt they had proved themselves superior to the Germans who had affected to despise them. Prussian Guard, Bavarians, Brandenburgers—all the *élite* of the Germans—had been beaten time after time by men from office stools, mines, and studios. The winter drew an inevitable barrier across the battlefield. But the main purposes of the battle were being achieved. Many fine spirits indeed had fallen, but they fell knowing they had a just cause. The new armies were full of splendid material.

It is at this point we are bound to pause. Is it the whole of warfare to throw these gallant fellows into the furnace along with the enemy? Was there no alternative? The successes at Verdun plainly told a different story. The finish of the Staff work in the October and December battles left little to be desired. But the British armies were still at school, and their successes were won at a greater cost. This was one thing. And the strategy behind these long-drawn-out battles? In an appreciation of the gallantry of the Allied soldiers we must not forget that the Germans had fought a magnificent defensive, and only yielded up a strip of ruined territory which they had occupied at the beginning of the war.

But Ludendorff's testimony is worth recording: "The massed attacks of the enemy always succeeded. Not only did our *moral* suffer, but in addition to fearful wastage in killed and wounded, we lost a large number of prisoners and much material." \*

\* *My Memories*, p. 267.



## XI. THE FALL OF BUKAREST.

THE month of October witnessed an overwhelming change in the fortunes of Rumania. At the beginning the Rumanian armies were stretched across Transylvania, about a third of which lay in their rear. The Allies seemed to be winning with hardly a blow. At the end of the month the Rumanian armies were all on the defensive, within their own frontier. Certain inevitable consequences of being thrown on the defensive were clear. The frontiers of Rumania were so long that it was almost impossible to prevent an active and daring enemy invading the country. The obvious reply was the strategy indicated by General Alexeieff, but it was unacceptable to the Rumanians.

In October, then, Rumania began to suffer for the length of her frontiers. She was to feel their burden instead of using the advantage they conferred against the enemy. The western frontier measured about 400 miles, the Danube added about 270 more to Turtukai, and the Dobrudja frontier was at least 100 miles long. These 670 miles offered hostages to the attack. Falkenhayn's Transylvanian army had an array of talent at its disposal. In the north, where the abortive attempt was made to cut Rumania off from Russia, Marshal Arz, the general who had commanded the frontal attack upon Brest Litovsk in August 1915, was in charge. The middle sector of the Transylvanian front, which looked directly south towards Bukarest, was directed by General von Morgen, one of the earliest generals to win fame in Poland, under Mackensen's command. The column which had forced its way through the Roter Turm Pass was under General Krafft von Delmensingen, the former Chief of the Bavarian Staff. The Vulkan Pass column was directed by General Kühne. Including the Danube army under General Kosch, there were probably twenty-five divisions of Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Bulgars, and Turks. Nominally there were half a million enemy troops engaged; actually there were at most only half this number of bayonets, with a large body of cavalry and a considerable accumulation of artillery.

The Moldavian sector of the front proved too obdurate to yield any reasonable results. The middle sector, covering the oil valleys and the direct road to Bukarest, was little more tractable, and at first the attempts to force the Vulkan Pass failed disastrously. The 11th Bavarian Division was practically annihilated there towards the end of October. It was a famous division too, and with four cavalry regiments it made an impetuous rush up the Jiu valley, which leads from the pass. The Bavarians had actually reached the northern houses of Targul Jiu, the railhead south of the pass, and removed their helmets to rest, when General Vasilescu attacked the column upon the eastern flank. The mere threat seems to have been sufficient. The rôle of the column was to cut off the troops at Orsova; but when a blow was directed towards their own exposed flank, with the threat of cutting them off, they retreated in haste. The troopers even left their helmets behind. In the town itself were only a few detachments of Rumanian militia; but they were able to hold the Bavarians, and the division had to be withdrawn to refit. In its place came the 41st Infantry (Prussian) Division, under Lieutenant-General Schmidt von Knobelsdorf.

It was some little time before Falkenhayn was ready to make his second attempt up this valley. It was on 27th October that the Bavarians entered Targul Jiu, and they had satisfied themselves that this avenue of approach was certainly the

least strongly held. Indeed there were inevitably weak spots in so long a defensive line, and it had taken the Germans a long time to discover one. But towards the second week in November, General von Kühne's troops began to advance up the valley, not only in considerably greater force, but more cautiously. Accompanied by a body of cavalry, under General von Schmettow, they speedily began to cause the defenders embarrassment. The cavalry swept round towards the west and cut the railway between Orsova and Craiova. Targul Jiu fell on the 15th before a heavy concentration of guns. Then, as the infantry advanced from Targul Jiu towards Craiova, the cavalry wheeled towards the east, and the Rumanians found themselves giving battle for the city with the Prussian infantry in front and the Cuirassiers on their left flank. In such circumstances the issue was a foregone conclusion, and Craiova, an important junction and the capital of Western Wallachia (Oltania, as the Rumanians called it), fell into the enemy's hands.

Its loss had important results. It was the junction for Orsova, for Kalafat on the Danube, and for Bukarest. The force holding the Cerna river in the western corner of Wallachia and the Danube at Orsova was thus cut off. Craiova fell on 21st November, but already for three days communication with the Orsova force had been cut. It had, of course, roads at its disposal; but the enemy cavalry was closing in from the east, and the forces across the frontier kept up a heavy pressure along the line of the Cerna river and the Danube. The purpose of holding this western corner of Rumania was to prevent the enemy having use of the river, and how well the little force succeeded can be gathered from the fact that the Danube was not opened until 3rd December. The bulk of the Rumanian troops had been withdrawn, and little more than a division was left behind with a few field guns, and the behaviour of this tiny army was beyond all praise.

Two days after the fall of Craiova, Orsova had been taken, and also Turnu Severin. Immediately the enemy crowded into the north-west corner of the country; but the Rumanians retired into the woods to the north-east of Turnu Severin, and there gave battle. They imposed a check on the enemy, taking some prisoners and guns. In the next ten days they marched about, appearing now here now there, disconcerting the enemy, who were reported as encircling the little band day after day. Sometimes they were able to fall on small details of the enemy and disperse them, but towards the end of November they began to lose prisoners. It was almost impossible they should not be surrounded. At length, on 3rd December, they were engaged on the river Alt, and were unable to break off the battle before other forces of the enemy closed in and compelled them to surrender. There were but 8,000 men; and yet they had filled an important *rôle*, for in the struggle which had been proceeding between the main Rumanian army and the enemy it was a gain to keep from the decisive point every man or gun possible. The exploit of the Orsova army stands alone—a rounded-off story of heroism and skill.

Meanwhile more momentous events had been taking place towards the east. After the capture of Craiova, the bulk of General Kühne's army swept eastward. Rumania, like Eastern Galicia, is a country seamed with the courses of numerous streams, and it was currently expected that the Rumanians would stand upon these streams and resist every attempt to advance. The Alt (or Aluta) river offered a particularly good defensive line. A fairly broad and deep stream, it seemed an admirable line of defence. But no resistance was made there, for at this point Mackensen made his presence felt. While the enemy was marching eastward towards



the river, he threw troops across the Danube in its rear. Bulgars and Germans crossed from Sistova to Simnitzer on the night of 22nd November, in a fog, and also occupied the village of Islaz, a little to the west of the Aluta mouth. The crossings had been carefully chosen to facilitate the advance upon Bukarest. The town of Alexandria lies at the junction of the roads from Islaz and Simnitzer, and it would form an admirable base for the concentration of artillery and shells for the attack on Bukarest. From Alexandria a road ran due east to Giurgevo, and thence north to Bukarest. No other line of approach to the capital for masses of men and for heavy guns existed until the Pitesci road and railway to the capital was reached. The Plœsti-Predeal road, farther to the east, formed a third avenue for guns or men. These three roads were the only roads for heavy artillery, but their relative value may be gathered from a glance at the map. The southern attack was much nearer the city, and the battles which were fought in defence of the city were really more truly designed to prevent the capture of Bukarest before the armies to the north-west had time to retire. By 26th November Kosch had an army group twenty miles north of the Danube.

Bukarest was a ringed fortress, built under the supervision of General Brialmont. The circumference of the defence works was about fifty miles, and the forts were ranged at distances of about three miles from each other, and of three to seven miles from the centre of the city. There were eighteen large forts and eighteen smaller ones. In advance of the main walls was a system of temporary redoubts which raised the circuit to such an extent that the Germans calculated that 120,000 men would be required for the defence of the fortress. In 1914, according to German information, there were 60 armoured turrets for 4.7-inch guns, 6-inch guns, 6-inch and 9.4-inch howitzers, and nearly 70 armoured platforms for 8.25-inch howitzers, hundreds of disappearing platforms for quick-firing guns of low calibre, and about 400 guns for the field batteries. It was a formidable fortress; but the war had reversed the rôle of fortresses, and if they could not be held by the field army, it was far wiser to abandon them. In any case, the enemy had many siege howitzers which could be brought forward to concentrate upon the forts in turn.

The question of defending Bukarest was treated from the standpoint of modern war. And the actual battles that were fought were merely delaying actions to extricate the forces at Campulung and even Pitesci itself. As the enemy troops marched eastward they linked up with General Krafft von Delmensingen's force in the Roter Turm sector, and this new reinforcement pushed violently past Rymnik to the river Arges, where a pitched battle was fought. But before this a more critical engagement was being decided farther south. Mackensen had pressed his southern column in to Comana, and one section of his troops was threatening the village of Mihalehti, on the river Arges.

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General Lechitsky had gradually extended his flank southward to take in the Moldavian sector, and Kaledin took over his old sector. Gourko succeeded to Kaledin's original command. About this moment Lechitsky and Kaledin opened an attack in the Carpathians and Northern Moldavia. The reason was plain. The operations in Rumania hung more or less by a thread. If the enemy could, he would undoubtedly throw more troops in that direction, and these would be drawn of necessity from the nearest places where they could be spared. The Russian attack, threatening to issue from the Jablonica Pass and from Moldavia into Transylvania,

detained the enemy on these sections of the front. The Russians captured several ranges of mountains and the two summits controlling the exit into Austria-Hungary from the Jablonica Pass, but they were unable to retain these heights. Besides this indirect help to Rumania, Russia also sent further reinforcements. Adequate numbers could not be sent because of the poor communications; but those which were transferred were flung on to the critical sector of the front, just below the capital. All day, Saturday, 2nd December, the Russians counter-attacked, and with such success that at one time Mackensen's force was almost cut off from the northern columns and pinned to the Danube. His left wing was driven back and almost cut in two, east of Alexandria. There matters hung in suspense while Mackensen took breath and made his reply. If the Russians could have pressed at once to Alexandria, they could have driven him into the river. He threw out a small force towards Comana again, retook it, seized Gradichten, and then facing about, struck at the flank of the Russian wedge. It gave way, and the enemy was able to resume his advance all along the line in the south.

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Meanwhile the respite obtained by the check in the south had been pressed to advantage. On the Arges at Pitesci a violent battle developed, and the Rumanians fought with great vigour and gallantry. They were purchasing time for the retirement of the Campulung force with its guns along the Targovishte road, and this purpose was achieved. The enemy attacked repeatedly, and in the end the German cavalry seem to have got on to the left flank of the first army and conditioned the retreat. But though the Germans reported that they had achieved a decision, it was the Rumanians who had secured their aim. Bukarest was abandoned in due course on Wednesday, 6th December, after the Rumanian rearguards had fallen back, stubbornly resisting the enemy pressure. The army was still in being. It released the Predeal-Plœsti route last of all, for this was the most dangerous, and fell back to the north-east. Mackensen summoned the "fathers" of Bukarest to surrender on Tuesday morning. The Rumanians replied the following morning that it was not a fortress, and at noon they left the city. On the same day the heroic little band from Orsova was brought to bay and compelled to surrender.

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Hardly any event in the war produced as great an upheaval in Allied countries as this overrunning of Rumania. In Great Britain it must be reckoned one of the causes of Mr. Asquith's fall and the substitution of Mr. Lloyd George. The Allies' Eastern policy had been uniformly unsuccessful. The Dardanelles failure had been followed by the overrunning of Serbia; and as the same process was seen to be at work in Rumania, outspoken dissatisfaction made itself felt in all the Allied countries. Russia shared the ignominy of the Rumanian failure. Rumania had been persuaded to enter the war on the side of the Allies while she was already rendering them a great service. Before her entry into the war the Germans, thrown on the defensive everywhere, and compelled everywhere to bear hard blows, were losing *moral*. Men destined for the Somme front had to be told they were going to some other part of the battlefield, and only at the last moment were they removed to the bases for the terrible struggle in Picardy. It was the same everywhere, though at no other spot were tried German troops compelled to suffer so intense a bombardment and be so relentlessly battered by their enemy. The Rumanian campaign changed this. The enemy did undoubtedly march through



Rumania, and by a judicious colouring of his *communiqués* he magnified every step into a triumphal victory. The reports of the different columns at work suggested the tramp of vast armies whose blows shook the earth. They totalled less than half the divisions placed *hors de combat* in the Somme struggle. Every division that could be spared seems to have been drawn in, for the defeat on the Carso and at Monastir would never have been allowed if the Germans could have helped it.

The enemy gained in *moral* by the capture of Bukarest and Wallachia. He also gained in prestige throughout the world. It was inevitable that people should measure the might of the Allies' blows by their power to prevent the enemy taking the offensive on a large scale. It was not sufficiently realised that until a force is finally beaten it always retains some amount of initiative and can strike blows here and there. The enemy was undoubtedly hard hit by the Allied offensives, feeling the pinch for more effectives; but his forces were still great enough for him to take advantage of his interior lines and strike a blow. The East was Hindenburg's lodestone, and Rumania offered many chances owing to its long frontier. No explanation, however, was equal to brushing aside the conviction that things had been mismanaged, as of course they had; though possibly not more than is inevitable among a coalition of nations held together by the flimsiest ties. General Gourko \* states that Alexeieff had suggested that the Russians should be transferred to Transylvania; the Rumanians should withdraw to a defensive line a little east of Bukarest; and that the Rumanian army would thus be free to attack effectively, presumably towards Sofia. The Rumanians would not accept these suggestions, and, indeed, they were hard for a proud nation to carry out. But they were the dispositions of a soldier, and Rumania in the end had to be content with a position which was infinitely more humiliating.

The Germans by their success secured territory which, in case of a negotiated peace, much improved their position. It would need much to wipe off still more Allied territory. And the Allies' position had, therefore, deteriorated even in this respect.

But more. One of the earliest *communiqués* issued by Germany from Wallachia remarked the stores which had already been taken from the rich corn lands, which they had not, as a fact, entered at the moment. This gives us a hint of the chief object of the Rumanian campaign. It was largely a foraging expedition. There were starving mouths in Germany and Austria-Hungary, and victories meant to them only the chances of peace and the plenty they lacked. Hence the insistence upon the booty captured. The enemy must have secured a considerable amount of grain and cattle, as well as oil. But how much is the only point worth considering. Germany alone, in time of peace and plenty, had to import about 20 per cent. more corn than the whole normal surplus of Rumania. Even if she gained the whole of the Rumanian excess stores, she would still have insufficient to fill German mouths, not to reckon the Austro-Hungarian peoples. But this is to regard the position from a standpoint much too favourable to Germany. For besides what she would have required in normal years, she had to make up for the abnormal dearth. All that Rumania could have provided would not have put Germany in a good position as regards supplies, and it must be remembered that the Allies were not so foolish as to leave much of their supplies behind. Where they did not fire them they took them away to Northern Moldavia, where they meant to stand.

\* *Russia in 1914-1917*, p. 159.

One expert estimate reckoned that the enemy would gain three months' support from Rumania. Even this is probably far beyond the mark for the immediate gain. The next harvest would, of course, give her the yield of as much of the rich grain land as she could till or reap. The oil wells fell into her hands; and this was a more considerable gain, for oil is an essential constituent of high explosives. And, further, with the petroleum there would be a considerable yield of petrol, which was also a most necessary commodity for warfare.

**The Coalition.**—These real gains and the fictitious, added to the growing hostility in Greece, which reflected the mood in the East, led to so widespread a dissatisfaction that the criticism of the British Cabinet was almost incessant, and to a great extent it was also unjust. Sir Edward Grey was the villain of the piece in the popular mind. All the sins of Greece and the sufferings of Rumania were laid at his door. If he had acted more decidedly, been stronger, more ruthless, and so on, none of this would have happened. The worst criticism placarded the town with bills bearing the words, "Traitor Grey." This was intolerable; but the criticism which represented him as not a genius, and certainly not a German ruthless genius, was perfectly justified. He had a difficult position. The courts of the Allies were against any ruthless dealing with King Constantine at the moment, and short of this it is almost certain nothing would have availed in Greece. As to Rumania, Russia was the predominant partner there, and must be allowed to have the predominant and decided voice. What could any one do in the face of that? It might be said that Lord Grey could have brought the Allies to his own point of view, and thereby gained in decision, by the mere power of the purse and the pocket, which functions Great Britain largely performed for the Allies.

Mr. Asquith shared Lord Grey's disrepute, and had a unique one of his own. He was too slack, too prone to think all his duty done if he kept the forces together, and these embraced men who wished to go full speed ahead with others who wanted nothing so much as caution. Mr. Lloyd George became the focus of the energetic side of the Cabinet, and as the enemy marched through Rumania there matured an intrigue for putting him in Mr. Asquith's place. The *Morning Post* printed a leader pointing to him as the only possible head of a Government. The *Times* and the *Daily Mail* also hailed him as the man wanted. They called for a smaller Cabinet, or a War Council within the Cabinet. It should be of such dimensions that it could be trusted to come to rapid decisions on necessary points, and then press the decisions into action with the utmost vigour. How far Mr. Lloyd George was responsible for the development of the intrigue is not and cannot be known at present. But on 1st December he presented demands to Mr. Asquith suggesting a small War Council of which the Premier should not be a member. Lord Derby described the scheme as permitting the Prime Minister to be present at the meetings of the Council, and even to have a veto over its decisions; but while this may have been the surface of the question, it was not the whole. While Mr. Asquith was considering the proposition, he was informed that a compromise would be unacceptable. If he did not go, the Unionist members of the Cabinet would. It had been suggested that the Prime Minister was far too busy to attend the War Council's every meeting, and hence he could not be the chairman. But this ultimatum from the Unionists showed that the objection was not to the Prime Minister but to Mr. Asquith; and the *Times* of Monday, publishing part of Mr. Asquith's confidential communication to Mr. Lloyd George, confirmed this point. As soon as this was



realised, Mr. Asquith resigned, and the other Liberal members of the Cabinet went out of office with him.

Mr. Bonar Law was summoned to the Palace and asked to form a Ministry, and there was also a meeting at the Palace of the chief members of the Cabinet. On the following day, Tuesday, Mr. Bonar Law, after consulting with his colleagues, informed the King that he could not form a Ministry; and Mr. Lloyd George was summoned, and accepted the charge, with the help of Mr. Bonar Law. On the next day Mr. Lloyd George spent many hours reviewing his forces. His first difficulty was to make terms with Labour. The Labour representatives frankly distrusted him. But at the end of the day he was so far successful as to be able to accept the Premiership from the King.

A meeting of the Liberal Party on Thursday gave Mr. Asquith a unanimous ovation, and his tone and that of Lord Grey were admirable. There were no recriminations, but praise for Mr. Lloyd George, and offers to support his Government.

In France the criticism was more outspoken than in Britain. One member gave his version of the contribution of the different Allies, which showed France doing far more than her share. These criticisms were levelled at the General Staff, and a secret session had to be resorted to, after which M. Briand, the Premier, got a vote of confidence by 188 votes. But the dissatisfaction was latent, and the people gave the new regime a chastened support for the period of its good behaviour.

In Russia the tragic turning of the Rumanian campaign was one of the prime causes of the revolt of the patriots, which resulted in the revolution. Everything was being borne for the sake of the war; but if the ruling camarilla could not even defend an ally from such a fate, the question arose as to what purpose it served.

## XII. THE ADVANCE TO THE SERETH.

AT the fall of Bukarest the bulk of Rumania was doomed. It was almost impossible at that point to stem the enemy tide which was setting so forcefully towards the Sereth. Only two generals came out of the campaign with undiminished prestige. Averescu, who had been used as a sort of *deus ex machina*, flung from one point to another until it was at last recognised that he could not be used everywhere, became Commander-in-Chief. Presan had conducted his campaign from and in Moldavia with ability; and he, as Chief of Staff, with Averescu, had the task of reorganising and retraining the Rumanian units when they were withdrawn from the line.

But the fortunes of Rumania and the Rumanian campaign were more than a Rumanian interest. Rumania entered the war with great chances in her hands. When it was recognised that all was not well with her, General Berthelot, Joffre's Chief of Staff in the early part of the war, was sent with a French mission of officers to assist in withstanding the enemy. General Sakharoff, the victor of Brody, was later sent to take charge of the operations in the Dobrudja, and at the fall of Bukarest he was beginning to extend his sector across the Danube to meet Lechitsky's southward extension from Moldavia. At length this area became merely another sector of the Russian front, with General Sakharoff as "assistant to the Commander-in-Chief" (the King of Rumania), and responsible to the Russian Chief of Staff.

Presan remained Chief of Staff for the Rumanian units. At this point Rumania had to submit to measures which, agreed to at the opening of the campaign, might have saved the country.

Bukarest fell on 6th December, and it was not long before the Rumanians disappeared for the most part from the line, which was then taken over by Kaledin and Lechitsky. They had opposed to them the two generals of the Dual Monarchy who had shown ability in the war, Kövess von Kövesshaza, with the 7th Austro-Hungarian Army, and Arz von Straussenberg, with the 1st Army. The armies were not trusted as much as the generals, and a considerable stiffening of German troops was added under General von Ruiz and General von Gerok. The whole was nominally, since the accession of the Emperor Karl, under the direction of the Archduke Joseph, a pathetically stupid upholder of Austro-Hungarian independence and prestige. There was, besides, the 9th Army of Falkenhayn, gradually concentrated in line across Wallachia, with the cavalry corps of Count von Schmettow, and the army groups of Generals von Kühne, Krafft von Delmensingen, and Morgen, and the "Danube Army" of Kosch, a gradually increasing force. Across the Danube lay the Bulgarian troops. Mackensen, the first German executive general, was in chief command of the whole of the armies, including those of the Archduke Joseph.

The bulk of the fighting was done by Falkenhayn, who earned sufficient laurels in this campaign to wipe off a little of the disgrace he had won by sanctioning the Verdun campaign. The opposing lines made at the end of the first week of December a rough-shaped "L" across Rumania, the angle being about Oltenitza, on the Danube, and the extremities of the arms on the Black Sea above Constanza and at Dorna Watra. Part of the shorter arm ran north-east from Oltenitza along the Danube to a point about ten miles north of Cernavoda. In noting the formation of the battle line, we cannot fail to observe that Falkenhayn had already doubly concentrated his force, since he had reduced the front upon which he had to act to at least half of the long northern frontier of Wallachia, where his army had first come to grips with the Rumanians.

It may seem at first sight that it should have been possible to arrest the advance of the enemy now that the weak westward "foot" of Rumania had been cut off, and the armies were aligned on a front which had no similarly weak sectors. This suggestion is slightly reinforced by an examination of the ground, which, like Western Wallachia, is crossed by numerous river valleys, including the two formidable courses of the Jalomitza and the Calmatinul. These, near the Danube, offer excellent positions for defence, and though their upper courses are not considerable as obstacles, they are covered by the Cricovul River and the Buzeu. But when the march through Eastern Wallachia began, there was not a homogeneous Allied command to oppose to Mackensen, and there had been no time to construct any continuous defensive line which should cover the weak points of the river obstacles. Furthermore, it is permissible to infer a weaker resolution on the part of the Allied command in Rumania than on that of the enemy. At a certain point, where the Russians had to stand, or gravely, if not fatally, compromise their gains of the preceding summer, it is to be remarked that they stood. But it must also be noticed that after the fall of Bukarest, which was almost coincident with the taking over of the area by the Russians, the rate of advance began to decrease. It had fallen by a quarter at Buzeu; at Rimnicu Sarat it had fallen to two miles a day. The enemy was approaching vital positions, and the defence was stiffening.



Throughout the campaign there was evidence of enlightened enemy direction. In his eastward march Falkenhayn was playing for high stakes. There are certain reasons why the enemy should at the moment have been more ready to achieve spectacular in place of solid gains. They were very near exhaustion, and in fact they had long been weary of the war. They were about to make a flamboyant declaration to the world of their readiness to make peace, and the more territory they could occupy, and the greater the popular appearance of victory, the more would the civilian populations of the Allies be inclined to consider the offer. But there can be no doubt that the end and aim of every general is first and foremost to put his opponent out of the fight ; to kill, disorganise, or surround and capture him. Falkenhayn endeavoured to force the pace of his left flank in order that, by cutting the Rumanian lines of retreat, he might capture part of their army. After a stubborn struggle about Sinaia, the army of Averescu had to fall back from that town and admit the enemy to the Prahova valley the day before the evacuation of Bukarest. This in itself was of no great significance. The oil wells in the valley had been destroyed, and, indeed, the whole of the Rumanian army was in retreat. But their normal line of retirement was by way of the Kronstadt-Bukarest line, which runs through the Prahova valley to Ploesti. The 9th Army in its swoop upon Ploesti was therefore attempting to cut off Averescu's force, and in fact the enemy *communiqués* boldly announced that Falkenhayn had captured the bulk of it the day after the fall of Bukarest. The Rumanian rearguards with the destroyed guns alone were taken. The bulk of the army was carefully withdrawn, and added to the compact mass of Rumanian troops which checked the enemy advance from Mizil.

Half-way between this town and Ploesti the Cricovul stream runs due south across the railway which was the line of Falkenhayn's advance. The position was held until the enemy was able to force his way over the ground to the north ; but Mizil itself was not evacuated until it became clear that the upper waters of the Buzeu would be crossed at Cislau. Mizil was evacuated on the 11th, and Cislau on the following day, which saw the publication of the enemy offer to negotiate. By these events an interesting situation was created, for at Mizil the Jalomitza was outflanked. As the enemy were entering Mizil, they were also crossing the Jalomitza to Uriceni. The Danube army had already flung a flying column over the river the day before at Copiza. But the resistance south of Buzeu was still strong. On the day that Cislau fell, a vigorous Rumanian counter-attack was made south of the Mizil, and it was not until the 14th that Buzeu was evacuated. This is one of the most important railway centres in Rumania, lines from Ploesti, Foczani, Braila, and Cernavoda running through it. But it is noteworthy that the progress from Buzeu was slower than the advance from Ploesti. Falkenhayn began to meet the full weight of the Russian resistance. It was three days before he was over the Buzeu River ; but this enabled the weaker Danube army to force the Calmatinul. At this point a long stretch of the Danube was now in the hands of the enemy, and on the same day more Bulgar troops crossed the Danube at Fetesti, to swell the Danube army for its advance upon Braila.

The advance upon Rimnicu Sarat, the next objective of the army, was of supreme importance for the enemy, as the obviously easier way of taking Braila, which was looked upon as one of the greatest prizes of the campaign. The headquarters of the grain trade, with vast warehouses, factories, and workshops, it was dangled

before the eyes of the enemy's civilian population as though it would not only relieve immediate distress, but even repay them for all their sufferings. But it was too formidable a position to be attacked with any confidence frontally, and hence Mackensen planned to capture it by forcing the flanks. In combination with an attack through the Dobrudja, he designed to force forward the 9th Army up the left bank of the Buzeu. Rimnicu Sarat, which lay in the line of advance, produced some stubborn fighting, and a five days' battle carried the enemy but a few miles towards the approaches of the town. They found Krafft von Delmensingen's group wheeling round till his line of thrust was due eastwards against the Calnau stream, which runs roughly north and south. On his left flank was the German unit of Gerok facing north-east towards the valleys of the Zabala and Neruja, the western tributaries of the Putna. The formation of the attacking army was like the curve of a parabola, and another five days' battle took place on these positions. On 23rd December the right centre of Falkenhayn's army seized Balaceanu, a village some five or six miles from Rimnicu Sarat. The artillery was rapidly advanced, and the left flank of the Russian position came under a deadly fire. On the west Gerok and Delmensingen's Alpini were fighting in the hill country upon which the Russian defensive scheme was based. On Christmas Day the enemy had forced his way to the north-west of Rimnicu. On the following day they made a supreme effort, and succeeded in penetrating the defences, and the Russians drew their line nearer the town. But the decisive battle had been fought. On the 28th the town was evacuated after street fighting, and Falkenhayn marched northwards.

In the meantime the situation in the Dobrudja had been developing. It had been decided to evacuate the province, with the exception of the north-western corner; and unless Braila could be held, even this was to be abandoned. The tenure of Braila depended largely upon the success of the attempt to hold the enemy about Rimnicu, and hence, with the fall of that town, General Sakharoff relaxed his attempts to maintain a footing in the Dobrudja, and confined himself to the task of withdrawing the army in safety. In spite of the inflated Bulgar reports, the retirement was on the whole executed with no immediate compulsion, and the fact that they only claimed to have taken 6,000 prisoners and 16 guns from a force that must have amounted, with cavalry, to about 160,000, is ample testimony to the skill of the retirement. The first step took place on the 14th, when a line running eastward from Hirsova was reached. Three days later they were north of Babadag. The Cossack rearguards resisted vigorously north of the town and westward to Turcoia; but on the 19th Cerna was abandoned after an engagement which included the whole Dobrudja front. The Russians continued to retire, though visiting with swift punishment any part of the Bulgar force which showed too much eagerness. At this moment the bulk of the Russian forces were approaching Tulcea and Isaccea on the Danube, where lay the pontoon bridge which had been constructed very soon after the entry of Rumania into the war. On the 23rd they were withdrawn over the bridge into Bessarabia, and the bridges were destroyed. The next day Isaccea was occupied by the Bulgars. The Russians remaining in the Dobrudja were now holding a line stretching from the bend of the river below Macin to the eastern arm of the Danube, west of Isaccea. A few days later they had withdrawn a little, and held height 90, about three miles west of Greci. On 30th December this hill was lost to a German regiment, and the Russians were then driven to hold a line almost due north from Macin to Vacareni. It is at Macin



that the right arm of the Danube flows westward, and carries the other courses of the Danube to concentrate into the main stream at Braila. Macin, therefore, formed an outpost of Braila, towards which a road ran from it along the westward course of the river, following it to Galatz, where a road across the marshy ground in the bend of the river joins it from Vacareni. On 4th January Jijila was taken, and the Macin-Vacareni line had been broken. The Russians retreated on Braila and Vacareni, and were thence withdrawn across the Danube. The Dobrudja campaign was over.

As the German guns opened fire from the hill positions between Jijila and Macin, the Danube army was fighting with the Russian rearguards about Gurgueti and Romanul. With the advance against Rimnicu the mixed forces of the Danube army pushed their way forward across the Vishani-Viziru line. Filipeshti was evacuated on Christmas Day, after it had been fired by the enemy's artillery. But nothing further was attempted until the 9th Army had passed Rimnicu, when the Russians were compelled to adapt their right flank to the army retiring on the left bank of the Buzeu. This wing was accordingly withdrawn, but the left flank in the Danube neighbourhood, where a detachment of British armoured cars were operating, was only compelled to withdraw by the hopelessness of continuing to hold the advanced position while the Bulgars were lying outside Macin, between twenty and thirty miles in its rear, but across the Danube. The Russians, therefore, gradually withdrew, and after the rearguard action at Gurgueti and Romanul, crossed the Sereth. On 5th January the Bulgarian infantry entered Braila from the east as the German cavalry entered it from the west. But it was a mere empty shell. All the stores had been removed. Even the shops had their stocks bought up by the Russians before they withdrew. It was a town of 66,000 inhabitants, the fourth largest in Rumania; but prestige was not what the enemy hoped for in seizing it.

The left wing of the Danube army pressed forward towards the Sereth, and reached the southern bank between the mouth of the Buzeu and Campulung when the right wing was entering Braila. On the west of the Buzeu the army of Kühne and Schmettow's cavalry were attempting to reach the Sereth as far as the mouth of the Rimnicu River. This sector included the fortified area of Fundeni. The Russians had thrown out positions in advance of this area, and stubbornly held the road from Tatarani to Maxineni; but the picked German troops of Kühne's force and Schmettow's troops, after a pitched battle, carried the road and pressed onward. The Russians had no interest in maintaining their positions south of the Sereth, and they crossed to the north bank of the river in this area, as also farther east.

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Meanwhile the centre of importance had moved westward. The Foczani-Nomoloasa sector of the line, a stretch of 25 miles, formed the danger point for the Russians. East of that, the Sereth for some 30 miles to its junction with the Danube represents a broad area of marsh and swamp without a single bridge. The Russians made the most of this obstacle, since it was resolved to hold the Sereth line against all attempts to force it. From Nomoloasa westward, a distance of 100 miles, the struggle continued for some time; but with the exception of the 30 miles from the Magara Odobesci, a high mountain ridge, to Nomoloasa, the fighting resembled that in the Trentino and the main Carpathian ridges, in which, if the problem was

defined, it was only by being definitely incapable of solution during winter. In summer skilful troops of the first quality might force their way through such country ; but in winter, when tracks disappeared in the snow, it was almost impossible to make headway except through the valleys, and these, of course, were commanded from the summits. This tangle of wooded hill country, where the tracks not covered by snow became like glass, almost impassable for man or beast, held both sides in a common suffering when the winter frost set in.

The barrier of the Carpathians could be turned by skill into an impassable obstacle either facing towards the north-east or towards the south-west. It was the south-western face which was being utilised at the moment. The Sereth, similarly, with time, might have been turned into a formidable obstacle ; but before the war it had been usual to regard Russia as the only probable enemy of Rumania, which was a Power in alliance with the Central Powers. Hence the weak sector of the Sereth, where it leaves the mountains, had been fortified with great skill to form what were known as the Sereth lines. They had been originally designed by Brialmont, the engineer who built the Liége defences, and completed by the German engineer Schumann. About Galatz, Nomoloasa, and Foczani, elaborate series of batteries were built on an arc thrown out in advance of the towns. Two lines guarded the weak bridgehead of Nomoloasa. Foczani was the western bulwark of the fortifications, and was defended by fifteen groups of batteries arranged in three rows in formation like half an ellipse. But designed for defence against attack from the north, they were of very little value to the Allies in forming a bulwark against assault from the south.

But they showed the definite problem of the struggle, Foczani and Nomoloasa being still the weakest points. At least thirty miles of comparatively weak ground had to be defended, and it is a moot point whether that would not have been a sufficient door into the great beyond. It is true that an army advancing on such a front would have uncovered its left flank to attack from the mountains ; but it is obvious that any army advancing through a gap must uncover both flanks. Its chance is that it may with sufficient speed turn the flank of the enemy line to the left and right, and by rolling up the whole line defend itself by putting its antagonist to flight. But clearly it would have been a difficult undertaking to attempt to advance across the centre while the western sector remained firmly established and the eastern was unmoved.

The Moldavian or Carpathian sector was the critical one. It was the strongest ; but being also the one which offered the greatest prize to success, it was the most attractive. From the middle of October it had been under almost incessant attack ; but it had been defended with consummate skill. Being essentially a continuation of the Russian flank in the Bukovina, it inevitably reflected any operations on that part of the front. The Russians took advantage of this fact to create a feeling of nervousness in the two Austrian armies on the Moldavian front. At the beginning of December a careful local attack gave Russia possession of a range of heights south of Kirlibaba in the Bukovina ; and for a week a violent struggle was waged for their final possession. Later in the month, when the enemy was advancing on Buzeu, the Russians began an offensive up the Trotus valley, and carried their line forward into Transylvania, attacking successfully at the same time in the extreme south of the Bukovina. The effect of these constant small attacks was not only to maintain the frontier ridge positions, but to distract the



enemy's attention in critical moments of the advance against the Sereth, and to pin down all the forces on the sector attacked.

On this critical sector the Trotus valley, into which the Gyimes Pass opens, focussed the issue. With a railway threading the valley to its junction with the Sereth valley, it became a door into the Sereth valley, which reached, the Moldavian sector would have to be abandoned as well as the whole of the Lower Sereth. Below the Trotus valley and opening into it were lateral streams—the Uzul, Oitoz, Casin, etc.—which each offered access to the main avenue. The problem of the Allies was to hold the Trotus sector, the Sereth to its mouth, and the Danube. In effect, the Trotus could not be held if the lateral valleys were not under control, whence its defence included theirs; and its capture might be achieved by a successful assault through them. It was an inevitable consequence of the advance towards Foczani that the task of defending these valleys must become more difficult. As we have seen, Rimnicu Sarat was attacked from the north by Delmensingen's Alpini crossing the head waters of the river Rimnic. They were therefore some forty miles east of the Gyimes Pass, and some thirty miles eastward of the general line of the Transylvanian frontier. With every mile of advance towards Foczani they would make more difficult the maintenance of the line in the Lower Carpathians. Hence, as Rimnicu Sarat was tottering under the blows of the 9th Army, Gerok, Ruiz, and Arz extended the line of struggle to the north. Gerok, on the immediate left of Delmensingen, could not help profiting by the latter's advance when Rimnicu fell. The Zabala valley had already been turned from the south automatically. There were initial successes even in the Oitoz valley and the Trotus; but the attack up the Casin valley did not mature.

In the beginning of January, while the struggle was continuing in the mountains, the 9th Army, its left also in difficult hill country, was hammering at the defences of Foczani. Its right, when the Danube army was entering Braila, lay between Plaineshti and the Sereth about the Nomoloasa bridgehead. But the centre was rapidly advanced to the Milcov stream, on which their left wing had been struggling for some days. Gerok had advanced up the Nerusa and Zabala valleys on the left of Delmensingen; and, as the latter swung eastward, he was able to force his way up the Susitza valley to a point near Racosa. On the 6th an infantry regiment of the Munich bodyguard stormed the summit of the Magara Odobesci, which had held off the enemy from the region at the mouth of the Pitna and also defended the western flank of Foczani. The town was doomed; and to facilitate its evacuation a strong counter-attack was delivered between Foczani and Fundeni. This gave the necessary breathing space. On the 8th the enemy entered the town, claiming 3,910 prisoners and 3 guns, a very small haul even if it were true. Foczani is not on the Sereth, and by their withdrawal the Russians surrendered very little ground. Their new line lay from near Odobesci to Nanesci, and so along the Sereth.

The fall of Foczani was a sort of anti-climax of the campaign, since the very condition of its defence was that the mountain sector should be maintained. The rest of the campaign provided no considerable incident. The attack against the valleys, and the Sereth valley in particular, continued with varying success. For five days after the fall of Foczani the enemy attacked with great violence up the Casin valley, and gained an initial success which was largely neutralised in counter-attack. He crossed the Putna in a fog, but was promptly driven south again.

Vadeni, the angle between the Sereth and the Danube, was taken by the Turks in a dense mist, and retaken again. On 19th January the enemy with picked troops—West Prussians and Pomeranians—captured the straggling village of Nanesci, which is south of Fundeni, and had held the enemy off from the western arm of the V shaped pocket in which Fundeni lies. But they bought the success at a great price ; and it proved unproductive. Farther east the Bulgars by a bold *coup* crossed the southernmost arm (the St. George's arm) of the Danube delta ; but on the following night the small force was surprised and annihilated. With a loss of 1 killed and 42 wounded, the Russians captured 5 officers, 332 men, and 4 machine guns.

In the terrible hill country a ceaseless struggle went on ; but the issue was no longer in doubt. No line of continuous entrenchments could be drawn on such a terrain, and part of the struggle was with the course of nature, which in winter delivered over this silent land to an inevitable truce. Under its impetus, Germany withdrew the bulk of her forces, leaving the maintenance of the Rumanian sector to the Austro-Hungarian, Turkish, and Bulgar troops. The enemy had accomplished much, but he had not by any means achieved what he set out to do. He had set out to turn the whole Russian line. He intended to cross the Danube into Bessarabia, force his way into the Sereth valley from the Carpathian valleys, and in this way recover the bulk of the fruits of Russia's recent campaign. The line would have been forced back until the Bukovina positions were outflanked and untenable. In this aim the enemy failed, and he similarly failed in another purpose that he had hoped to accomplish. Rumania is a great grain and oil producing country. The enemy had been encouraging his people with the hope of unlimited supplies of both these commodities. But as more and more of the country fell into his hands he was forced to realise the emptiness of his hopes. It was found necessary to correct and chasten the German people's visions of unlimited food by an official pronouncement, and when the story of the destruction of corn and oil, machinery, and goods of all sorts was allowed to leak out, the Germans gave themselves up to a loud outcry about the Allied vandalism. The innocence and ingenuousness of such a charge are not the least ironical feature of the German temperament. The code of destruction and ruthlessness which guided their own conduct towards conquered territory was not only not to be applied to territory the Allies might conquer ; it was not even to be applied to their own goods.

The line upon which the opposing armies came to rest was that upon which Russia had determined to stand. Any farther retreat would have compromised the Russian positions in Galicia and the Bukovina. Yet in the main the Rumanian campaign was a triumph for Germany. Ludendorff had shortened his front considerably, and his positions everywhere in Europe were now as stable as they could expect to be. But it must not be thought he had won the successes without paying for them. He had suffered heavy loss, and had brought the end of the war no nearer. He had put out of the fight a considerable part of the Rumanian army ; but the rest was being reorganised and retrained under Averescu and Presan behind the lines. The conquered territory he treated with an infamy by this time familiar to the world as a normal expression of the German spirit. He asked neutral Governments to withdraw their representatives to gain a free hand for himself, and in the end compelled these representatives to leave. But the King and his Government at Jassy waited in hope for the turn of the tide which should sweep the enemy from their country. And lest the Rumanian campaign should seem wholly a loss



to the Allies, we have Ludendorff's testimony that, "in spite of our victory over the Rumanian army, we were definitely weaker as regards the war position as a whole." \*

### XIII. THE RECOIL AT VERDUN.

THE first of the objects of the Battle of the Somme, according to Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch, was the relief of Verdun. By the fall of the year that object had been achieved, and General Nivelle demonstrated the fact by two brilliant little actions which carried the French back to the line held on the fourth day of that unique contest. General Pétain had held and punished the Crown Prince's troops. He had accepted the gage flung down so arrogantly. "*On les aura*" was his fighting emblem, and under its ægis he began one of the most marvellous defensive battles the world has ever known. Nivelle, taking over the command of the 2nd Army on Pétain's promotion, did even more. Pétain made the struggle a profitless holocaust; Nivelle turned it into a defeat which was clear to the whole world.

On 21st July the Crown Prince boasted to the 50th Division: "The French think we shall weaken our hold on Verdun now that they have begun their attack on the Somme. We shall convince them of their folly." And the earlier part of the Somme battle saw desperate efforts to force open "the postern gate of Verdun," which seemed to be at length yielding. The Germans had reached Fleury on 25th June, and on 11th July a determined attempt was made to advance on the inner forts of Souville and Tavannes. The shell of Verdun lay less than three miles ahead, and four days of fearful fighting left the position little changed. General Mangin began on 15th July a counter-attack on Fleury, which proceeded, with little intermission, for over a month; but at the end of that time Fleury was once more securely in French hands. This phase of the struggle saw the opposed forces at Verdun come to equilibrium, and the French very gradually secure the advantage. A German attack on 3rd September was the last effort to restore the relative positions; but when the counter-attacks had proved it abortive, this terrible and glorious area sank for a little into an uneasy rest.

Already the Battle of the Somme, the Russian offensive, the Rumanian incursion into Transylvania, and the Isonzo battles were making their imperative call on the German reserves. By the end of August three divisions from Verdun had been drawn into the struggle in Picardy. Some of the divisions had gone to the Eastern front, and a new mind inspired the German strategy. Ludendorff later ordered an inquiry into the Verdun campaign, and fittingly wrote its epitaph: "We only just fell short of obtaining a moderately favourable conclusion." † A grandiose strategy and the tactics of despair could reap no more; but the climax was yet to come.

No campaign made so complete an appeal to the emotion of the Western Allies as did that of Verdun; but as yet it lacked the elation of clear and open victory. It was this that Nivelle was preparing in the early part of October. He put Mangin in charge of a group of divisions whose rôle was the reconquest of Douaumont and the ground yielded since the 26th February. Mangin, whose name became a household word before the war was over, was a brilliant Colonial general, who, like Pétain, commanded a brigade in the Sambre battle in 1914. Like Pétain, too, he was in

\* *My Memories*, p. 303.

† *My Memories*, p. 208.

charge of a division at the Marne. He commanded the 5th and Pétain the 6th of Hache's 3rd Corps which took Montmirail in the morning of 9th September, and materially assisted in Foch's victory. After two brilliant counter-attacks at Verdun, he was given command of the 3rd Colonial Corps. His new command consisted of the divisions of Generals Guyot de Salins, de Passaga, and de Lardemelle. These three divisions were withdrawn from the front, rested, and practised in attack against positions reproduced in *facsimile* behind the lines.

The preparation for the attack included a prolonged and searching bombardment. From the turrets of Douaumont fort the Germans had possession of observation which enabled them to dominate the French positions and the ground over which an attack must be delivered. Such was the judgment of a German general before the battle, and he even went so far as to maintain that "we can only prevent our first line being surprised by means of it." Surprise was out of the question when the bombardment began, and there is evidence that the Germans were acquainted with the general lines which the offensive would follow.

Guyot de Salins' division of Zouaves, Marsouins, Moroccans, and Algerians lay on the left from Haudromont to Thiaumont; Passaga's Chasseur division in the centre about Fleury; and Lardemelle's infantry looking towards the elaborate defences before Vaux. Over the same area the Germans had a force of about the same strength, twenty-one battalions being in the line, seven in support, and ten in reserve. These troops were supported by a concentration of artillery which, despite the prior claims of the Somme, was still extremely heavy. And there were in all eight divisions which could be called upon at need. The intense artillery bombardment began on Saturday, 21st October, in a brief interlude of fine weather, and tons of high-explosive shell were dumped scientifically on the German positions. The defenders suffered terribly during this ordeal, as the airmen directed the guns; but in order to leave nothing to chance, a feint attack was made on the 23rd to discover the hidden batteries, which were then subjected to special treatment.

The attack was to be made in two stages, separated by a period for consolidation, reorganisation, and rest; and zero time—the beginning of the infantry movement—was fixed for 11.40 on 24th October. The day dawned dull and misty; but at the prearranged moment the attack began, and the 11th Infantry Regiment, acting on the left of Salins' division, rapidly seized Haudromont quarries, which had been turned into an amazing fortress. But they were not in secure possession for some time. On their right the Zouaves and Colonial troops carried the two ravines between them and the Bras-Douaumont road, and in the afternoon had pushed north-east of the road, while the Zouaves were capturing Douaumont village. Three Moroccan regiments were used to secure the fort, "leap-frogging" ahead until Commandant Croll's men were in place to the left and Major Nicolay's battalion came up for the frontal attack. Already Passaga's left brigade, under Colonel Hutin, who had commanded the Sanga River column in the Cameroon campaign, had reached their objective, the eastern turret of the fort, which was now practically surrounded. Nicolay's battalion had at first lost their way in the fog. The thick curtain rose in the afternoon, and the men saw the ramparts before them, and ran forward. Before three o'clock the grenadiers were bombing out the last details of the defence.

Passaga's division had secured all their objectives within an hour, and in the afternoon consolidated themselves above Fausse Côte ravine and west of Vaux





The French Counter-attack at Verdun, October 1916.

pond. Lardemelle's division had the least distance to cover, but it included the most difficult positions. His infantry, men of Dauphiné and Savoy, could do no more than secure their first objectives. Vaux, on its hillock, covered the ground over which the men had to advance. South of Vaux pond, in Fumin Wood, the defence held its own almost as far as Damloup battery. But though the day died with the right for the moment held, it had merited Nivelles's triumphant order: "In a few hours you have wrested at one stroke from our mighty enemy the ground to the north-east of Verdun, bristling with obstacles and defences, which took him eight months to win in pieces and at the cost of desperate efforts and great sacrifice."

The struggle for Vaux fort continued. The second day of the attack saw the surrender of the remainder of the Douaumont garrison and the repulse of four determined counter-attacks. In the next few days Lardemelle's troops achieved contact with Passaga's at Vaux pond, and even penetrated to the walls of the fort. But the troops were tiring under their prolonged strain, and to continue the snail-pace advance was simply to imitate the costly German tactics which Nivelles by all means wished to avoid. The troops were withdrawn a little, and the bombardment reopened, and when the assault began once more General Andlauer's division had replaced Lardemelle's troops. They speedily carried Fumin Wood, and thus worked up the left flank of the fort, while they pressed their right to the seat of it. On 2nd November explosions were heard in the fort, and the patrols found that it was being evacuated. The next day the French held the whole plateau, and on the 5th they captured Vaux and Damloup villages.

This series of operations, carried out economically, with skill and meticulous care, gave the French 6,000 prisoners, many guns, and much material. The Germans attempted to write off the defeat by proclaiming that they had been on the eve of withdrawing from the positions; but there is sufficient evidence that this was far from their intention.

General Nivelles, however, was not as yet content. He had gained a victory which offered peculiar satisfaction to the French pride, and its method even more than its effect had already marked him out as the successor of Joffre in command of the Western front. The October battle had delivered Verdun. Another battle was necessary to deliver these outer defences, newly rewon, from the threat of observation positions on Pepper Hill and the high ground between Louvemont and Bezonvaux. An immense amount of work had to be done before the next assault could be delivered. The very thoroughness with which the bombardment for the first attack had been carried out made the new advance more difficult. The broken ground had to be restored, and order imposed upon the chaos. But in a month from the capture of Vaux all was ready for the new bombardment—except the weather. But on 11th December, when Germany was making her peace offer to the Allies, a break in the weather allowed the preparation to begin.

Passaga and Salins' divisions, rested and retrained, were again to form part of Mangin's spearhead, and with them were the divisions of Generals du Plessis and Muteau. On the German side there were fifteen battalions in the front line, as many more in support, and the remainder of five divisions in reserve. There were also four other divisions, including one Guard-Ersatz, ready if necessary. Two of the divisions holding the line were "resting" after the Somme. The 15th December dawned cloudy but without mist, and the infantry, launched at 10 o'clock, went ahead rapidly. Muteau's troops had placed a cincture about Vacherauville in twenty



minutes, and in another quarter of an hour they held Pepper Hill. There are few more brilliant episodes in the war than this capture of so strong a position, with 1,200 prisoners, in thirty-five minutes. Salins' division had farther to go, and Louvemont and Chambrettes Farm were not taken before the close of the day. Nicolay's battalion captured Louvemont, but their commander was shot just before the success was won. The division of General du Plessis found Helly ravine a difficult nut to crack, but succeeded in pushing on ahead toward Chambrettes and Bezonvaux. Passaga's left was held up with the right of Du Plessis, but his right carried the difficult position of the Wood of Hardaumont.

When Nivelle left in the afternoon, to become Commander-in-Chief of the Western front, 1,500 prisoners had already been taken. The next day Bezonvaux was captured, and by the 18th Chambrettes Farm was securely held; and, tactically, the French were almost back at the beginning of the Battle of Verdun. They had captured 11,387 prisoners, 115 guns, 44 mine throwers, 107 machine guns, and much material. Nivelle had informed the Ministry of his plans, and forecast the success he would win. He had therefore established his theory, and for the moment his fame was second to none in France. The French losses for the first day were hardly a fifth of the prisoners taken before sunset.

The Germans had launched their peace offer with a boast of invincibility. The battle was a pointed comment upon that claim. There was, of course, no strategic importance in these victories, and the appropriate reservations to add to Nivelle's claim to fame were given when he directed the attack in the following spring against one of the cardinal points of the German defence. But these two battles rounded off the Verdun episode, and were strictly in keeping with a struggle which history must reckon as unique.

#### XIV. THE BATTLE OF ROMANI AND THE CLEARING OF SINAI.

It was during the lull after the surrender of Kut that the Turks made their last attempt to force the line of the Suez Canal, and the battle of Romani which resulted was the most important fought within Egyptian territory. The Turks had captured a British force at Kut; had compelled the Allies to abandon the Gallipoli adventure; and had kept the Russian campaign in Armenia within bounds. They knew that the force in Egypt was weaker than before, and the prizes of a successful attack were too great not to be worth a vigorous effort. Such an expedition was rendered the more necessary by the revolt of the Grand Sherif of Mecca, who, proclaiming Arab independence on 9th June, had occupied the Holy City and the port of Jeddah, and besieged Medina. His example was followed by the Arab tribes of the Red Sea coast; and the Turks could not ignore a challenge to the one claim they had upon Muhammadans as the chief Muslim state and protector of the holy places.

A successful attack on the Suez Canal would have shown the Arabs the futility of their revolt, and if the Turks had not diverted troops to the Hedjaz they might have had a better chance of achieving their purpose. In the third week of July the British airmen found that a large, well-equipped force was approaching the canal across the Sinai peninsula. The expedition was provided with howitzers up to 8 inches calibre, which they conveyed across the sand dunes by cutting shallow

tracks and filling them with brushwood and planks. Moving by the coast route from El Arish the army of about 20,000, under General von Kressenstein, slowly approached the entrenched positions between Mehamdia and Romani, the railhead. They seemed in no hurry to attack, and General Murray began to make arrangements to disperse the invaders. At length, on 27th July, Kressenstein moved westwards, and on 3rd August a general advance began. The British line between Mehamdia and Romani was held by the 52nd Lowland Territorial division under Major-General W. E. B. Smith. Gallipoli had made scars in their ranks, but drafts were assimilated. On the left lay Major-General Sir H. G. Chauvel's Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted troops. The whole force was under the orders of Major-General the Hon. H. H. Lawrence.

The battle opened with an attempt to capture the positions west of Romani, with a view to cutting the railway communications between it and Kantara. Colonel J. B. Meredith, with a small force of Light Horse, found himself in touch with the Turks south-east of Romani just before midnight on the 3rd August, and three hours later the brigade was heavily engaged on the dunes. They fell back very slowly, but by five o'clock they were reinforced and were able to check the advance. The Turks were on the dune (Mount Royston) three miles west of Romani by daylight; but before noon this flank attack had exhausted itself. The railway line to the west was thenceforward secure, and the attack on the Lowlanders, though supported by a heavy and well-directed fire, had already failed. Katib Gannit, the chief British observation post, was smothered with shell and had to be evacuated. Two battalions of Manchester Territorials (Ardwick men), with New Zealand Mounted Rifles, recaptured Mount Royston in the afternoon, and the Lowlanders also counter-attacked with partial success. In the morning the position was completely recovered, and 2,000 prisoners were taken.

The Turkish attack had failed, and the retreat began. The cavalry were ordered to pursue the enemy. The Turks had prepared numerous positions in the line of their retreat, and the Light Horse and Yeomanry found their progress checked. The Lowlanders had also been held up north of Katia; but on the following day (6th) they occupied the oasis. The Yeomanry, Light Horse, and New Zealanders took up the pursuit, with a column of camelry flung out to the south. On the 9th the cavalry attacked with such persistence that a heavy rearguard action developed. The advance base at Bir el Abd was evacuated on the 12th, and the cavalry pursued the Turks some miles farther. But the victory was already complete. Some 4,000 prisoners had been captured, and the total casualties were probably not far short of 8,000. A Krupp mountain battery of four guns, nine machine guns, 500 camels, and two field hospitals were captured. But, as on the earlier attempt against the canal, the heavy guns were safely removed—a fact which adds a considerable seasoning of failure to the elation of victory. Even with this reservation, the engagement could hardly have satisfied the Turks' desire to restore their prestige; and it remains an inexplicable fact that the Turks and their German masters never fought so unintelligently as in this area where they had most to gain. Of their bravery no British troops require further conviction.

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After the Battle of Romani General Murray began his preparations for entering Palestine. Day by day the railway and pipe line were carried forward with defended posts about the railhead, and airplanes and mounted troops scoured the country



for signs of the Turk. General Chauvel dispersed a body of Turks from Mazar in mid-September, and the enemy retired to Masaid, a few miles west of El Arish. The command had been reorganised by this time. Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode, a brilliant cavalryman from France, was placed in command of the striking force, the "Desert Column;" and Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Dobell, who had commanded the British troops in the Cameroons, was given command of the "East Force."

Mazar was reached by the railway four days before the end of November, and before long there were concentrated two infantry divisions, the Imperial Camelry, and the Anzac mounted troops. Everything now waited upon the water supply. Ten miles to the east lay the point selected by Chetwode for his last halting-place before El Arish; but the water supplies were not organised there until 20th December, when the concentration was moved thither. Orderly columns of infantry, guns, and supplies moved eastward, with the airmen covering them from above and the cavalry out on the flank. The next morning General Chauvel's cavalry, at the end of a twenty-five mile ride, found El Arish had been evacuated two days before. The Turks had fallen back on Magdhaba, a fortified settlement on the track between El Arish and the railhead at Auja. An hour after midnight on the 22nd the Anzac mounted troops and camelry set out for Magdhaba. At daybreak General Chaytor with the New Zealand troops, and General Royston with the Australian Light Horse, were in position to the east and south-east of the defences, and General Smith's Camel Corps delivered a frontal attack.

The positions had been strongly fortified, and resisted until four o'clock, when the attacking force was almost at the last extremity from lack of water. But a general attack was then delivered, and the resistance collapsed. The Turkish commander, Klaat Bey, with 1,200 prisoners was captured.

**Rafa.**—Maude had just begun to move forward in Mesopotamia as General Murray marched eastward in the Sinai peninsula, and the Turkish fortunes had begun to decline. Another stage in this process was passed when General Chetwode finally cleared the Turks from the peninsula. A few armoured cars and a detachment of mounted troops were added to the force which had reduced Magdhaba, and the column moved out in the early afternoon of 8th January from El Arish, where the railhead then lay. They arrived at Sheikh Zowaid at one o'clock in the morning of the 9th, amid fields of barley and clover. In the early morning the Anzac Mounted Division and Camelry were in position for the attack on Rafa from the south and east, and by 11 A.M. General Chaytor was in Rafa. Meanwhile the elaborate defensive position on the west was stubbornly held, and was not captured by the Yeomanry until the whole garrison had surrendered at dark. But at 3.30 Turkish reinforcements were reported advancing from the north-east and south-east, and orders were given to force a decision. The New Zealanders rushed the northern defences as the Light Horse entered the south-eastern trenches at sundown. The Wellington Mounted Rifles were able to hold off the reinforcements from the north-east, and the victory was assured.

Over 1,600 prisoners were taken (1,437 men and 35 officers unwounded, and 162 wounded). The Bedouins had been interested spectators of the battle. The women grazed their herds behind the lines, and one flock of sheep was tended by a girl between the trenches and the firing line. Shortly after the battle a race-meeting was held on the battlefield. One of the races was for "The Promised Land

Stakes," and the troops regarded their long halt in view of the promised land with disfavour. But some months were to pass before the next advance, and meanwhile no further operations took place except the motor detachments' descent upon Siwa oasis in February.

Sayed Ahmed had wintered there with 800 troops. Siwa lies some 200 miles from Mersa Matruh across the desert ; but General Hodgson travelled ninety miles the first day, and the next day was but fifteen miles from Siwa. Twenty-two cars fought a strange battle on 3rd February at Girba, west of Siwa, and during the night the Senussi retired. An armoured car detachment had been left to cut off the retreat, and although it could not reach the pass, it was able to ambush the head of the column. Over 200 Senussi were killed or wounded, and Siwa gave a welcome to General Hodgson on the morning of 5th February.

## XV. THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE.

THE Rumanian campaign was, as we have pointed out, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Allies' contention. They contended that they had secured the initiative; that the enemy's power was far advanced in decline; that an Allied victory in the field was near at hand. Hindenburg saw in the Rumanian campaign a chance of putting these contentions to the test. He would prove that he retained the initiative; that he had sufficient forces for a great offensive; and that the Allied hope of victory was illusory. The Germans laid great stress on *moral*, and the audience to which they played comprised the Allied peoples, who would naturally judge by the obvious. Whatever victories were obtained in Rumania would not actually prove any of these three propositions ; but as the Allies' knowledge of the German resources was chiefly a *deduction* from analogy, and from a partial acquaintance with his losses, even expert opinion might waver and civilian opinion would be deeply impressed with the apparent conflict between inference and fact.

That there need have been no such conflict a little thought will make clear. Up to the last and decisive battle with the enemy, he must retain the force to strike a blow somewhere at choice. In an army of 3,000,000 men it is obvious he could make economies and readjustments here and there, and so obtain 200,000 or 300,000 for a small offensive. And furthermore, if a nation is bent on fighting *à outrance*, it can embody and substitute civilians ;\* can substitute elderly men or youths at points where less strain is to be feared, to an extent which falsifies all judgment founded upon normal recruitment and sound military procedure. There is a limit even under such conditions ; but when actual fact is denied, and only inference is available, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the critical point is still far off while the troops are not only successfully holding upon all fronts, but upon one actually advancing at a rate which had only been paralleled in recent history by the Russian summer offensive. Great Britain had made the last sacrifice on 28th May in the Second Military Service Act, which swept away the distinction between married and unmarried men, made boys of eighteen liable to conscription, and

\* The Patriotic Auxiliary Service Bill, enforcing war work upon all men between the ages of seventeen and sixty, and suggesting that women should also come to the assistance of the State, was introduced into the Reichstag on 24th November, and rapidly became law.



extended the age to forty-one. On the surface only the sacrifice was seen. The last half of the year was the bloodiest period of the war. All the fronts were afire, and yet in spite of all the Allies' efforts there seemed to be little change in the situation.

Marshal Hindenburg, of course, was not misled by such reasoning. He knew his own inability to hold out for any great length of time.\* He knew how the wastage of war and the pressure of the blockade were eating away the foundations upon which his whole position depended. The wheat crop had been bad everywhere. The potato crop relied on to eke out subsistence had also failed in Germany. Eggs were almost unobtainable; fats were lacking. Even transport, which is the framework of modern life, was giving out. Under such circumstances, the winter represented a sort of nightmare to Germany. But it was worse for Austria. Hungary had refused to pool resources with her, and was selling her small surplus at exorbitant prices to Germany. In men, in money, in food, in material, the Dual Monarchy was much worse off. From that point of view, no relief loomed ahead; and even when peace was signed, so fundamental a shortage could not be redeemed for many months.†

But even militarily the case was hopeless. Von der Goltz had laid down an axiom about war which all military students held sound. There is a certain rhythm in all wars, and a time must come in aggressive war when the maximum advantage has been achieved. No further advantage can be expected except at a disproportionate cost, when, of course, the advantage would not be a *net* advantage at all. Germany had long passed her zenith, and though von der Goltz suggested that at such a moment peace should be offered, she had never followed this sound axiom except partially. Peace had been offered to states separately, and this marked the stubbornness of the German belief in war. They would not give up the idea of settling one or other of their fundamental problems by force of arms, and it was this primitivism that led them to the commission of barbarities like the sinking of the *Lusitania*, which but more firmly cemented the wills of all waverers against them.

In part this obduracy was dogmatic, in part a class feeling. The war party, fostered, encouraged, and flaunted by the Kaiser, was fighting for its existence. Unless they secured a peace which would justify them, their dominance was doomed. And hence the orgy of blood dragged on and on, until at length sheer ruin loomed ahead. The populace was growing restive. All makeshifts had not sufficed to change appreciably the critical shrinkage of numbers. The Allies were preparing fresh efforts. Winter was beginning. So, with all the bombast they could summon to their aid, the enemy on 12th December announced to the world their readiness to open immediate negotiations for peace. The date is significant. It was six days since Bukarest ‡ had been evacuated, and all the inferences noted above had been given time to sink in. The enemy was advancing from triumph to triumph.

The terms of the peace discussion must be put on record. The German Note was handed by the German Chancellor to Mr. Joseph Clark Grew, Charge d'Affaires of the United States in Berlin.

\* "The army had been fought to a standstill, and was utterly worn out." [*My Memories*, p. 304.]

† This paragraph, written at the time of the peace offer in 1916, has received ample verification since the armistice.

‡ Ludendorff had stipulated that the offer should not be made "until the campaign in Rumania had been brought to a conclusion." With the fall of Bukarest he withdrew his objection to further delay. [*My Memories*, p. 309.]

“ Mr. Charge d’Affaires,

“ The most formidable war known to history has been ravaging for two and a half years a great part of the world. That catastrophe, that the bonds of a common civilisation more than a thousand years old could not stop, strikes mankind in its most precious patrimony ; it threatens to bury under its ruins the moral and physical progress on which Europe prided itself at the dawn of the twentieth century. In that strife, Germany and her allies, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, have given proof of their indestructible strength in winning considerable successes at war. Their unshakable lines resist ceaseless attacks of their enemies’ arms. The recent diversion in the Balkans was speedily and victoriously thwarted. The latest events have demonstrated that a continuation of the war cannot break their resisting power. The general situation much rather justifies their hope of fresh successes. It was for the defence of their existence and freedom of their national development that the four allied Powers were constrained to take up arms. The exploits of their armies have brought no change therein. Not for an instant have they swerved from the conviction that the respect for the rights of other nations is not incompatible with their own rights and legitimate interests. They do not seek to crush or annihilate their adversaries. Conscious of their military and economic strength and ready to carry on to the end, if they must, the struggle that is forced upon them, but animated at the same time by the desire to stem the flood of blood and to bring the horrors of war to an end, the four allied powers propose to enter even now into peace negotiations. They feel sure that the proposition which they would bring forward, and which would aim to assure the existence, honour, and free development of their peoples, would be such as to serve as a basis for the restoration of a lasting peace.

“ If, notwithstanding this offer of peace and conciliation, the struggle should continue, the four allied Powers are resolved to carry it on to an end, while solemnly disclaiming any responsibility before mankind and history.

“ The Imperial Government has the honour to ask, through your obliging medium, the Government of the United States to be pleased to transmit the present communication to . . . .”

At the same time a Note was presented to Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State to the Pope. It was couched in different language ; but the fact that such a move was made is instructive. It was an attempt to secure the assistance of the Pope in bringing the Entente Powers to the German point of view, and its terms show what most people conceived as revolting hypocrisy, but which was certainly a revelation of that strange perversity by means of which the German mind looked upon anything as permissible and necessary which seemed for the moment to lead to the end.

“ According to intructions received, I have the honour to send to your Eminence a copy of the declaration which the Imperial Government to-day, by the good offices of the Powers entrusted with the protection of German interests in countries with which the German Empire is in a state of war, transmits to these states, and in which the Imperial Government declares itself ready to enter into peace negotiations. The Austro-Hungarian, Turkish, and Bulgarian Governments have also sent a Note. The reasons which prompted Germany and her allies to this step are manifest. For two years and a half a terrible war has been devastating the European continent. Unlimited treasures of civilisation have been destroyed ; extensive areas have been



soaked with blood; millions of brave soldiers have fallen in battle, and millions have returned home as invalids. Grief and sorrow fill almost every house. Not only upon belligerent nations, but also upon neutrals, the destructive consequences of the gigantic struggle weigh heavily. Trade and commerce, carefully built up in years of peace, have been depressed. The best forces of the nations have been withdrawn from the production of useful objects. Europe, which was formerly devoted to the propagation of religion and civilisation, which was trying to find a solution for social problems, and was the home of science and art and all peaceful labour, now resembles an immense war camp, in which the achievements and works of many decades are doomed to annihilation.

"Germany is carrying on a war of defence against the enemies who aim at her destruction. She fights in order to assure the integrity of her frontiers, and the liberty of the German nation in the right which she claims to develop freely her intellectual and economic energies in peaceful competition and on an equal footing with other nations. All the enemies' efforts are unable to shatter the heroic armies of the allies that protect the frontiers of their countries. Strengthened by the certainty that the enemy will never pierce the iron wall, those fighting at the front know that they are supported by the whole nation, which is inspired by the love of its country, ready for the greatest sacrifices, and determined to defend to the last extremity the inherited treasure of intellectual and economic worth and social organisation and the sacred soil of the country. Sure of our own strength but realising Europe's sad future if this war continues, seized with pity in the face of the unspeakable misery of humanity, the German Empire, in accord with her allies, solemnly repeats what the Chancellor already declared one year ago—that Germany is ready to give peace to the world by setting before the whole world the question whether or no it is possible to find a basis for an understanding.

"Since the first day of his pontifical reign, his Holiness the Pope has unswervingly demonstrated in a most generous fashion his solicitude for the innumerable victims of this war; has alleviated the sufferings and ameliorated the fate of thousands of men injured by this catastrophe. Inspired by the exalted ideas of his ministry, his Holiness seized every opportunity in humanity's interest in order to bring to an end so sanguinary a war. The Imperial Government is firmly confident that the initiative of the four Powers will find a friendly welcome on the part of his Holiness, and that the work of peace can count upon the precious support of the Holy See."

Crude as these Notes were, and disgusting in the light of the actual facts of the war, they were an extremely clever move on the part of the Central Powers. They were not the outcome of pity. Such a word comes badly from the ravagers of Belgium, Poland, Serbia, and Rumania, and the promoters of Zeppelin raids and the submarine campaign. They were, of course, motivated by necessity. But, nevertheless, they constituted a landmark in the war. All the world was tired of the war. Those who hated the militarism of the Central Empires as an utterly evil thing were weary as much as those who, hating all war, had opposed it almost from the beginning. All the soldiers were weary, not so much of their sufferings—horrible as these were—but of the monstrous and colossal folly of it all.

The enemy peace offer must needs cause people to reflect and to wonder if peace could not be obtained and an end put to the war. Idealists who hated war, and were disposed to take words more or less at their face value, would feel that further blood-

shed was unnecessary. Even those responsible for the Allies' decision could not remain deaf to the cries of the people in the occupied territory. The Notes were specious in form, though crude in their claims. The bombastic tone could be explained away by the necessity under which the Chancellor was of maintaining before his country the fiction of victory. The least that might be expected to result from the Notes was a division among the Allied peoples. If the offer were categorically rejected, all the waverers and pacifists would be strengthened in their opposition to the continuance of the war.

And yet the Note stated no terms. This, again, might plausibly be explained in the same way as the bombastic phraseology. Terms which would be acceptable to the Allies would hardly be characterised by that victorious bloom which the Notes bore. On the other hand, the Chancellor, misinterpreting the feeling of the Allies, may have thought that it would be easier for the Allies to accept his terms in a private conference. Clearly there are advantages in secrecy. But for the Allies there were also perils. If the war were to be once discontinued, it would probably never be resumed. But if it were to be discontinued while the enemy was in occupation of so much Allied territory, and then the enemy proposed unacceptable terms, the advantage would clearly be on the side of the enemy. As Mr. Lloyd George, the newly appointed Premier, put it, to accept the offer would be to put his head in a noose of which the enemy held the string. One by one the Allies made their first informal but definite rejection; but before they had made their united and formal reply, the situation had been changed still further by a Note from America.

This Note, dispatched to all the belligerents, met with a strange reception. At first it was thought to be a deliberate attempt to help Germany, and in England it met with much hostility even from responsible quarters. Indeed, it is said that the most responsible quarter was frankly of the opinion that it was a "pro-German" move. Mr. Lloyd George had already in a famous speech warned off any prospective intermediaries, and it is certain that at first most people in Great Britain regarded the President's Note as an attempt to mediate; and since Germany still sought to pose as victor, it appeared an attempt to mediate in her favour. Germany also seemed to look upon the Note with much suspicion, though later on a movement of appreciation was discernible. Yet the terms of the Note were such as to remove all suspicion from the minds of the Allies, and their appeal could not properly be ignored by the enemy unless his purpose was frankly aggressive.

The Note insisted that it was written in the most friendly spirit, and as coming not only from a friend, but also from the representative of a neutral nation, whose interests have been most seriously affected by the war, and whose concern for its early conclusion arises out of a manifest necessity to determine how best to safeguard those interests if the war is to continue.

"The suggestion which I am instructed to make, the President has long \* had it in mind to offer. He is somewhat embarrassed to offer it at this particular time, because it may now seem to have been prompted by the recent overtures of the Central Powers. It is, in fact, in no way associated with them in its origin, and the President would have delayed offering it until these overtures had been answered, but for the fact that it also concerns the question of peace, and may best be considered in connec-

\* Count Bernstorff was in September instructed to ask the President to make an early offer of peace. [*Ludendorff, My Memories*, p. 309.]



tion with other proposals which have the same end in view. The President can only beg that his suggestion be considered entirely on its own merits, and as if it had been made in other circumstances.

"The President suggests that an early occasion be sought to call out from all the nations now at war such an avowal of their respective views as to the terms upon which the war might be concluded and the arrangements which would be deemed satisfactory as a guarantee against its renewal or the kindling of any similar conflict in the future as would make it possible frankly to compare them. He is indifferent as to the means taken to accomplish this. He would be happy himself to serve, or even to take the initiative in its accomplishment, in any way that might prove acceptable; but he has no desire to determine the method or the instrumentality. One way will be as acceptable to him as another, if only the great object he has in mind be attained.

"He takes the liberty of calling attention to the fact that the objects which the statesmen of the belligerents on both sides have in mind in this war are virtually the same, as stated in general terms to their own people and to the world. Each side desires to make the rights and privileges of weak peoples and small states as secure against aggression or denial in the future as the rights and privileges of the great and powerful states now at war. Each wishes itself to be made secure in the future, along with all other nations and peoples, against the recurrence of wars like this, and against aggression or selfish interference of any kind. Each would be jealous of the formation of any more rival leagues to preserve an uncertain balance of power amidst multiplying suspicion; but each is ready to consider the formation of a league of nations to ensure peace and justice throughout the world. Before that final step can be taken, however, each deems it necessary first to settle the issues of the present war upon terms which will certainly safeguard the independence, the territorial integrity, and the political and commercial freedom of the nations involved.

"In the measures to be taken to secure the future peace of the world the people and the Government of the United States are as vitally and as directly interested as the Governments now at war. Their interest, however, in the means to be adopted to relieve the smaller and weaker peoples of the world of the peril of wrong and violence is as quick and ardent as that of any other people or government. They stand ready, and even eager, to co-operate in the accomplishment of these ends when the war is over with every influence and resource at their command. But the war must first be concluded. The terms upon which it is to be concluded they are not at liberty to suggest; but the President does feel that it is his right and his duty to point out their intimate interest in its conclusion, lest it should possibly be too late to accomplish the greater things which lie beyond its conclusion, lest the situation of neutral nations, now exceedingly hard to endure, be rendered altogether intolerable, and lest, more than all, an injury be done civilisation itself which can never be atoned or repaired.

"The President therefore feels altogether justified in suggesting an immediate opportunity for a comparison of views as to the terms which must precede the ultimate arrangements for the peace of the world which all desire, and in which the neutral nations as well as those at war are ready to play their full and responsible part. If the contest must continue to proceed towards undefined ends by slow attrition until one group of belligerents or the other is exhausted, if million after million of human lives must continue to be offered up until on the one side or the other there are no

more to offer, if resentments must be enkindled that can never cool, and despairs engendered from which there can be no recovery, hopes of peace and of the willing concert of free peoples will be rendered vain and idle.

"The life of the entire world has been profoundly affected. Every part of the great family of mankind has felt the burden and terror of this unprecedented contest of arms. No nation in the civilised world can be said in truth to stand outside its influence or be safe against its disturbing effects. And yet the concrete objects for which it is being waged have never been definitely stated.

"The leaders of the several belligerents have, as has been said, stated these objects in general terms; but stated in general terms they seem the same on both sides. Never yet have the authoritative spokesmen of either side avowed the precise objects which would, if attained, satisfy them and their people that the war had been fought out. The world has been left to conjecture what definite results, what actual exchange of guarantees, what political and territorial changes or readjustments, what stage of military success even, would bring the war to an end.

"It may be that peace is nearer than we know; that the terms which the belligerents on the one side and on the other would deem it necessary to insist upon are not so irreconcilable as some have feared; that an interchange of views would clear the way at least for conference and make the permanent concord of the nations a hope of the immediate future, a concert of nations immediately practicable.

"The President is not proposing peace; he is not even offering mediation. He is merely proposing that soundings be taken in order that we may learn, the neutral nations with the belligerents, how near the haven of peace may be for which all mankind longs with an intense and increasing longing. He believes that the spirit in which he speaks and the objects which he seeks will be understood by all concerned, and he confidently hopes for a response which will bring a new light into the affairs of the world."

The nobility of this document makes it unique among the pronouncements of great states. It is true that all its phrasing is not equally perfect, but there is an idealism about it which seldom escapes into the commerce of nations. The points which affronted the Allies were the clauses in which the President suggested that both sides had the same objects in the war. But he had not exactly said that. What he said was that the *general claims* of both sides *seemed* the same; and that was the reason for endeavouring to see if the particular phrasing of their demands was also identical.

The atmosphere, already highly charged, was made electric by an ill-conceived statement of Mr. Lansing paraphrasing the document as meaning that the United States was on the verge of war. And later on it was discovered that some persons had foreknowledge of the issue of the Note and contrived to make money from the fact. Among those were reported to be Count Bernstorff, who was stated to have made £400,000.

It is probable that the circumstances which surrounded the issue of the Note were a little responsible for the crudity of the Allies' reply to the German Note. The reply had to be made together, and the delays and the joint authorship seem to have had their influence upon its wording. It was staccato in character and incoherent in thought, but it sufficiently expressed the Allies' purpose. After a statement that the reply was a joint one according to their obligation, it continued:—



"As a prelude to any reply, the Allied Powers feel bound to protest strongly against the two material assertions made in the Note from the enemy Powers—the one professing to throw upon the Allies the responsibility of the war, and the other proclaiming the victory of the Central Powers.

"The Allies cannot admit a claim which is thus untrue in each particular, and is sufficient alone to render sterile all attempt at negotiations.

"The Allies have for thirty months been engaged in a war which they had done everything to avoid. They have shown by their actions their devotion to peace. This devotion is as strong to-day as it was in 1914, and after the violation by Germany of her solemn engagements, Germany's promise is no sufficient foundation on which to re-establish the peace which she broke.

"A mere suggestion, without statement of terms, that negotiations should be opened, is not an offer of peace. The putting forward by the Imperial Government of a sham proposal, lacking all substance and precision, would appear to be less an offer of peace than a war manoeuvre.

"It is founded on a calculated misinterpretation of the character of the struggle in the past, the present, and the future.

"As for the past, the German Note takes no account of the facts, dates, and figures which establish that the war was desired, provoked, and declared by Germany and Austria-Hungary.

"At the Hague Conference it was the German delegate who refused all proposals for disarmament. In July 1914 it was Austria-Hungary who, after having addressed to Servia an unprecedented ultimatum, declared war upon her in spite of the satisfaction which had at once been accorded. The Central Empires then rejected all attempts made by the Entente to bring about a pacific solution of a purely local conflict. Great Britain suggested a Conference, France proposed an International Commission, the Emperor of Russia asked the German Emperor to go to arbitration, and Russia and Austria-Hungary came to an understanding on the eve of the conflict; but to all these efforts Germany gave neither answer nor effect. Belgium was invaded by an Empire which had guaranteed her neutrality, and which has had the assurance to proclaim that treaties were 'scraps of paper,' and that 'necessity knows no law.'

"At the present moment these sham offers on the part of Germany rest on a 'War Map' alone, which represents nothing more than a superficial and passing phase of the situation, and not the real strength of the belligerents. A peace concluded upon these terms would be only to the advantage of the aggressors, who, after imagining that they would reach their goal in two months, discovered after two years that they could never attain it.

"As for the future, the disasters caused by the German declaration of War and the innumerable outrages committed by Germany and her Allies against both belligerents and neutrals demand penalties ('sanctions'—assurances), reparation, and guarantees; Germany avoids the mention of any of these.

"In reality, these overtures made by the Central Powers are nothing more than a calculated attempt to influence the future course of the war, and to end it by imposing a German peace.

"The object of these overtures is to create dissension in public opinion in Allied countries . . . They have the further object of stiffening public opinion in Germany and in the countries allied to her, one and all severely tried by their losses, worn out by economic pressure, and crushed by the supreme effort which has been

imposed upon their inhabitants . . . Finally, these overtures attempt to justify in advance in the eyes of the world a new series of crimes—submarine warfare, deportations, forced labour, and forced enlistment of inhabitants against their own countries, and violations of neutrality.

“Fully conscious of the gravity of the moment, but equally conscious of its requirements, the Allied Governments, closely united to one another and in perfect sympathy with their peoples, refuse to consider a proposal which is empty and insincere.

“Once again the Allies declare that no peace is possible so long as they have not secured reparation of violated rights and liberties, recognition of the principle of nationalities, and of the free existence of small states; so long as they have not brought about a settlement calculated to end, once and for all, forces which have constituted a perpetual menace to the nations, and to afford the only effective guarantees for the future security of the world.”

The Note then proceeds to state the case of Belgium and the terrible sufferings inflicted upon her by the Germans during the war. This section of the Note was a sort of anti-climax. It is well to keep the chronology of these Notes clear. Germany's offer to negotiate was made on 12th December; on 20th December the United States called upon the belligerents to state their terms. Ten days later the Allies made their reply to the enemy, and their reply to President Wilson's Note was not made until 10th January. Meanwhile Germany had made her reply to Mr. Wilson's Note on 25th December, and by the terms of this document lost much of the political advantage she had gained by the offer to negotiate. The sole idea of Mr. Wilson's suggestion was that terms should be frankly stated. The German reply announced that “an immediate exchange of views seems to be the most appropriate road in order to reach the desired result.” It therefore suggested an immediate meeting of delegates of the belligerent states at some neutral place. This was, of course, mere evasion. The Allies would enter such a conference at a disadvantage, as the enemy well knew.

Delegates of the enemy Powers were already in Switzerland. There were delegates of Austria-Hungary trying to buy off Italy separately if they could not bargain off all the Allies. Sweden, Norway, and Denmark followed Mr. Wilson's precedent on 28th December, as Switzerland had five days earlier; but on the day that the Allies' reply to Germany was published, Spain replied to Mr. Wilson's Note by declaring the time for intervention to be inopportune. Germany's move had clearly failed. There were some who held that the door was not completely closed by the Allies' reply; but, so far as it was not, the only possible sequel for Germany was to state her terms, and she had already informed the President of the United States that she did not see her way to do this.

So matters lay when, on 10th January, M. Briand for the Allies handed their answer to Mr. Wilson's Note to Mr. Sharp, the American Ambassador in Paris. It was in French, as indeed were the other Notes; but this loses less by translation. It is notable for its frankness and for its (perhaps unpracticable) idealism. That it appealed to America is clear, and at one stroke the Allies made a notable advance in neutral favour. The terms of the Note were as follows:—

“The Allied Governments have received the Note delivered to them on 9th



December in the name of the United States Government. They have studied it with the care enjoined upon them both by their accurate sense of the gravity of the moment and by their sincere friendship for the American people.

"In general, they make a point of declaring that they pay homage to the loftiness of the sentiments inspiring the American Note, and that they associate themselves whole-heartedly with the plan of creating a League of Nations to ensure peace and justice throughout the world. They recognise all the advantages that would accrue to the cause of humanity and civilisation by the establishment of international settlements designed to prevent violent conflicts between the nations—settlements which ought to be accompanied by the sanctions necessary to assure their execution, and thus to prevent fresh aggressions from being made easier by an apparent security.

"But a discussion of future arrangements designed to secure a lasting peace presupposes a satisfactory settlement of the present conflict. The Allies feel a desire as deep as that of the United States Government to see ended, at the earliest possible moment, the war for which the Central Empires are responsible, and which inflicts such cruel sufferings upon humanity. But they judge it impossible to-day to bring about a peace that shall assure to them the reparation, the restitution, and the guarantees to which they are entitled by the aggression for which the responsibility lies upon the Central Powers, and of which the very principle tended to undermine the safety of Europe—a peace that shall, moreover, permit the establishment upon firm foundations of the future of the nations of Europe. The Allied nations are conscious that they are fighting, not for selfish interests, but, above all, to safeguard the independence of peoples, right, and humanity.

"The Allies are fully alive to and deplore the losses and sufferings which the war causes neutrals, as well as the belligerents, to endure; but they do not hold themselves responsible, since in no way did they desire to provoke the war; and they make every effort to lessen such damage to the full extent compatible with the inexorable requirements of their defence against the violence and snares of the enemy.

"Hence they note with satisfaction the declaration that, as regards its origin, the American communication was in no wise associated with that of the Central Powers, transmitted on 18th December by the United States Government; neither do they doubt the decision of that Government to avoid even the appearance of giving any, even moral, support to the responsible authors of the war.

"The Allied Governments hold it necessary to protest in the friendliest but clearest way against the suggestion in the American Note of a similarity between the two belligerent groups; this likeness, founded upon the public statements of the Central Powers, conflicts directly with the evidence, both as regards the responsibilities for the past and the guarantees for the future. In mentioning this similarity, President Wilson certainly did not mean to associate himself with it.

"If at this moment there be an established historical fact, it is the aggressive will of Germany and Austria to ensure their mastery over Europe and their economic domination over the world. By her declaration of war, by the immediate violation of Belgium and Luxemburg, and by the way she has carried on the struggle, Germany has also proved her systematic contempt for every principle of humanity, and of all respect for small states. In proportion as the conflict has developed, the attitude of the Central Powers and of their Allies has been a continual challenge to humanity and to civilisation. Need we recall the horrors that accompanied the invasion of

Belgium and Servia, the atrocious rule laid upon the invaded countries, the massacre of hundreds of thousands of inoffensive Armenians, the barbarities committed against the inhabitants of Syria, the Zeppelin raids upon open towns, the destruction by submarines of passenger steamers and merchantmen, even under neutral flags, the cruel treatment inflicted upon prisoners of war, the judicial murders of Miss Cavell and of Captain Fryatt, the deportation and the reduction to slavery of civil populations? The accomplishment of such a series of crimes, perpetrated without any regard for the universal reprobation they aroused, amply explain to President Wilson the protest of the Allies.

"They consider that the Note they handed to the United States in reply to the German Note answers the questions put by the American Government, and forms, according to the words of that Government, 'an avowal of their respective views as to the terms on which the war might be concluded.' Mr. Wilson wishes for more: he desires that the belligerent Powers should define, in the full light of day, their aims in prosecuting the war. The Allies find no difficulty in answering this request. Their war aims are well known; they have been repeatedly defined by the heads of their various Governments. These war aims will only be set forth in detail, with all the compensations and equitable indemnities for harm suffered, at the moment of negotiations. But the civilised world knows that they imply, necessarily and first of all, the restoration of Belgium, Servia, and Montenegro, with the compensations due to them; the evacuation of the invaded territories in France, in Russia, in Rumania, with just reparation; the reorganisation of Europe, guaranteed by a stable *régime* and based at once on respect for nationalities and on the right to full security and liberty of economic development possessed by all peoples, small and great, and at the same time upon territorial conventions and international settlements such as to guarantee land and sea frontiers against unjustified attack; the restitution of provinces torn formerly from the Allies by force and against the wish of their inhabitants; the liberation of the Italians, as also of the Slavs, Rumanians, and Czecho-Slovaks from foreign domination; the setting free of the populations subject to the bloody tyranny of the Turk, and the turning out of Europe of the Ottoman Empire as wholly foreign to Western civilisation.

"The intentions of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia in regard to Poland have been clearly indicated by the manifesto he has just addressed to his armies.

"There is no need to say that, if the Allies desire to shield Europe from the covetous brutality of Prussian militarism, the extermination and the political disappearance of the German peoples have never, as has been pretended, formed part of their designs. They desire above all to ensure peace on the principles of liberty and justice, and upon the inviolable fidelity to international engagements by which the Government of the United States have ever been inspired.

"United in the pursuit of this lofty aim, the Allies are determined, severally and jointly, to act with all their power and to make all sacrifices to carry to a victorious end a conflict upon which, they are convinced, depend not only their own welfare and prosperity, but the future of civilisation itself."

At the same time that this Note was handed to the American Ambassador, a Note was also handed to him from the Belgian Government. The Belgian Government especially thanked Mr. Wilson for the friendship shown by the United States to Belgium, and it traversed the sequence of events from the time when it was obliged



to take up arms for its self-defence to that moment, and claimed her rights in virtue of her blameless past, the valour of her soldiers, her fidelity to honour, and her people's remarkable aptitude for work.

The Notes were both extraordinarily well received in America and generally among neutrals ; and then affairs seemed likely to sink back to the old state again when Mr. Wilson, on 22nd January, made a notable speech to the Senate suggesting more definitely than ever the interest of the United States in any peace, and making some suggestions as to the sort of peace that must be for which the States would pledge their force to preserve security. This speech was remarkable for the high tone it adopted, and for the calm and practical consideration it gave to the question of a League of Nations. But before it had been delivered, the world was astonished by the publication of a letter in Germany purporting to be by the Kaiser. It was dated 31st October, and was addressed to the Imperial Chancellor. It ran :—

"MY DEAR BETHMANN,—I have long been turning our conversation over in my mind. It is clear that the peoples of the enemy countries, kept in a morbid war atmosphere and labouring under lies and frauds, deluded also by fighting and hatred, possess no men who are able, or who have the moral courage, to speak the word which will bring relief—to propose peace.

"What is wanted is a moral deed, to free the world, including neutrals, from the pressure which weighs upon all. For such a deed it is necessary to find a ruler who has a conscience, who feels that he is responsible to God, who has a heart for his own people and for those of his enemies, who, indifferent as to any possible wilful interpretation of his actions, possesses the will to free the world from its sufferings. I have the courage. Trusting in God, I shall dare to take this step. Please draft Notes on these lines, and submit them to me, and make all the necessary arrangements without delay.

Signed WILLIAM, I.R."

This document, with its insane egotism and mad perversity, was published on 14th January, because the German Socialists were at that time claiming to have been the prime movers in producing the Peace Note. Count Tisza, the Hungarian Premier, had before this claimed that Austria-Hungary had taken the initiative. The fact is an illuminating comment upon the state of things in the countries of the enemy and those of the Allies. It was a title to popularity among the enemy to have been associated with the Peace offer, and the Kaiser meant to secure his share. It was precisely the opposite among the Allies, where the hint of endeavouring to bring about peace was sufficient to raise anger and suspicion. In fact, in spite of all the bombast and rubbish talked by the Kaiser and his advisers, the whole of the enemy peoples wished for peace with all their hearts. The blockade was crushing their lives out. The battle lines were drinking all their health and strength. Only by carefully keeping a blind eye towards the sea and towards the country at home, only by the fiction that starvation and economic breakdown are an irrelevancy, and that the sacrifice of all a nation's youth and strength is a slight discount upon victory, could the enemy fail to see that all his plans had gone astray, and he was near the final catastrophe. Yet it was said that the enemy had communicated to Mr. Wilson terms which were those of a victor, and at the end of the month he declared his intention of initiating a complete submarine blockade of the Allies. With that all thought of peace sank into the background, for America, thus threatened like a belligerent, broke off diplomatic relations.

## XVI. THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

A LONG period of rumour and anxious silence with regard to Russia was ended on Thursday, 15th March, by an announcement by Mr. Bonar Law in Parliament that a revolution had taken place in Russia, and that the Tsar had abdicated. The Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch had been appointed Regent. For the preceding week, Mr. Bonar Law said, the British Government had known that an upheaval was in progress, but only on that day had they heard from the British Ambassador the announcement of the Tsar's abdication. It had, in fact, only taken place that day.

Tsardom represented the oldest and most discredited autocracy. Nowhere in the world was the system of government compounded of so much that was thoroughly evil. The terrible memories of political martyrdoms will not soon fade from the world. It seemed only necessary to be competent and honourable to be persecuted; only necessary to be beyond the thought of honour to win success. The Court party with its German queen had all the evils of Germanism and none of its virtues, and it had, besides, some thoroughly Russian vices. Sycophants were welcomed there. Superstition had taken root in the person of the sinister figure of the monk Rasputin. This vile character, so aptly named *rasputin* ("worthless"), was of peasant origin, and retained to the end the manners of a peasant. He had an extraordinary power over women, a spell with a basis of hypnotism behind it, which enabled him to mould his dupes to his will. He had the privilege of visiting everywhere, and other privileges besides, which in the end proved his undoing. He seduced women of all classes; and the strong vein of mysticism in the Russian character procured him an immunity where any ordinary man would have had short shrift.

His power at Court was extraordinary. The Tsar was weak, the Empress weak, but superstitious and obstinate. Rasputin came to have enormous influence over her; and she ruled the Tsar. It is said that Rasputin was bought by German agents; and he certainly was the instrument of reaction. At length he seems to have cast his lascivious eyes on a young and beautiful princess. That sealed his fate. A number of Russians found him one night, and put an end to his worthless life. The body was recovered from a stream into which, still warm and bleeding, it had been flung. At first an energetic hue and cry went out for his murderers; but the threads led to men who could hardly be impeached with impunity, and so the affair was hushed up. The body was buried at Tsarskoe Selo until the revolutionaries dug it up, to deal with it more after its deserts.

But reaction was not Rasputin alone. The reactionary Premier, Stürmer, represented the time-honoured repression, with an infusion of treachery that was a little new. It is certain that under his *régime* there were discussions with German agents as to the arrangement of a separate peace. How far he countenanced these is not yet clear. But it is beyond doubt that the honour of Russia among the nations came second in his mind to the preservation of the old corrupt *régime* of Tsardom in its most repressive form. He is credited with having been bought by Germany, and of having practically accepted terms of peace which included the occupation by Russia of Northern Moldavia—a development that would have covered Russia with infamy. Probably he ever preserved an emergency exit. He listened, now



to encourage, now to snub the discussions. Astute he was, undoubtedly. He saw the coming storm, and probably thought the only way to ride it was to conclude a peace and turn the soldiery against the people.

When at length the Tsar had to dismiss him after the terrible indictment made in the Duma in November 1916 by M. Miliukoff, it was only to appoint Prince Golitzin, who was a man of much the same type. Stürmer continued his activities, and Protopopoff,\* the Minister of the Interior, is supposed to have visited Sweden with the same intention of discussing separate peace terms. Indeed, it is admitted the subject was raised with the Councillor of the German Embassy at Stockholm; and the published account of the interview contains just so much of what actually occurred as could be printed and published. Outside Russia, people dimly comprehended the course of events. The dismissal of Sazonoff, who was thoroughly trusted by the Allies, and had the confidence of the world in his integrity, was a painful blow to the Allies. Then Trepoff went, and a full reactionary Government came into power. The Allies, whose cause suffered by association with a tyrannous autocracy, could not but feel the wavering of their position keenly. They were pledged to defend small nationalities, and were professing an enlightened charter of democratic liberty, while Russia was notoriously a severe repressor of Poland, and had no semblance of liberty in her administration. The Tsar was deaf to all the pleadings of his generals to dismiss the men to whom the people objected, and particularly Protopopoff, the *protégé* of Rasputin.

But this marks the force of the revulsion of feeling when the Allies heard of the Revolution. They could not stand before the world as a compact body of democracies at war with decadent and tyrannous autocracies. The repercussion was felt in Germany at once, and America immediately savoured the changed atmosphere of the war. How the Revolution came about was itself a golden fact. The Russian nation are long-suffering, and their patriotism was content to bear almost anything rather than hamper the successful prosecution of the war. But it was precisely the war which was suffering. There were many competent public men in Russia, and Prince Lvov's Zemstvo Union, which organised the whole of the Red Cross administration almost to perfection, was a triumph of which any country might have been proud. What, then, was the dismay of these men to find the army cheated of its supplies at critical moments, and the country, too, suffering widely. Transport, of course, was the grand necessity of every country as the war wore on. But it became too clear that the reactionary ministers were deliberately conniving at the holding up of supplies to the people, in order to add fuel to the demand for peace which they could then with a show of reluctance meet. The food riots were the first moving of the revolutionary elements. There was plenty of food in Russia, but it was prevented reaching the capital. The Duma attempted to deal with this clear grievance by putting the control of food in the hands of the zemstvos and municipalities. At once the Tsar took up the challenge. The Duma had assumed the power of initiative. The Duma should go. An imperial ukase, issued from

\* The *Pester Lloyd* of February 28, 1919, gave some evidence of three offers of peace made to the Central Powers by Russia through a neutral channel. The first was made on October 16, 1915; the second on January 27, 1916; and the third on 6th March, five days before the Revolution. It is to be noted that the parties of the Extreme Right submitted, in the summer of 1916, a memorandum to the Tsar suggesting an early peace, and Protopopoff became Minister of the Interior in October 1916, shortly after his return from Sweden. Bethmann Hollweg states that peace offers were made to Russia as early as January 1915.

Headquarters on 12th March, dissolved the Duma and the Council of Empire as from the preceding day. Thus it was reaction that set the match to the powder.

Lord Milner had not long returned from Petrograd. He is reported to have been sent to attempt to find some means of averting the Revolution. He was hardly the best man to send, though he seems to have tried several expedients which might have saved the Tsar. But failing all round, he seems to have behaved with little discretion, and attempted to frown down the discontent. His effort provoked a furious retort from a Liberal paper, and the Revolution was practically decided upon.

The forces which carried it through were strangely assorted. In 1906 the army had saved the Tsar, and he attempted to regain control through the same means now. Regiment after regiment was thrown upon Petrograd; but they were more the people than the army, and at once joined the insurgents in dealing with the secret police. A regular army, or thoroughly assimilated conscripts, may buttress up the monarchy and fire on the class whence it is drawn. But conscripts who were but yesterday in the fields or workshops have not that *esprit de corps* which makes them an aloof and unreasoning instrument in the arms of their officers. From one angle the Revolution seems to be all the army, and it is quite certain that without the soldiers it could never have come to pass. Only one prominent general seems to have held aloof from the movement. Ivanoff, the hero of so many engagements in Galicia, under orders from the Tsar, tried to reach Petrograd with a large body of troops; but the rails were torn up in front of the train, and he was left impotent far away.

But the Revolution was the consummation of the movement of 1905. For the three days, 13th to 15th March, there had been street fighting in Petrograd. The regiments which had joined the rioters formed an odd army. They were joined by workmen and students, led by sergeants or by officers who had revolted with them. The insurgents defeated the police (some of whom were stationed on the roofs of houses with machine guns) and the loyal troops. The working men and the soldiers formed a governing committee for the soldiers by a representative selection. The Duma was still sitting, under its able President, M. Rodzianko. It had refused to obey the Tsar's order, and instead telegraphed to him reporting the state of affairs. "It is necessary," it concluded, "immediately to charge a person enjoying the confidence of the country to form a new Government. Delay is impossible. Any delay means death. Pray God that this may be our responsibility, and that it may not fall on a crowned head." The chief generals commanding the army were supplied with copies of the message, and asked to use their influence with the Tsar. Alexeieff, the Grand Duke Nicholas, Brussiloff, and Ruzsky did so. Later a more urgent message was sent. The Tsar did not consent until it was too late.

The revolted troops interviewed the Duma as to its intentions. The Duma informed the troops that they were determined to have a change in the authority, and they proceeded to elect an Executive Committee, consisting of twelve of the chief party leaders. No reply had been received by the Duma from the Tsar, and the hour had passed. The troops were arresting ministers and storming prisons, releasing all the political prisoners. Thursday, the 15th, was the decisive day. Until five o'clock in the morning the Committee of working men and troops sat with the Executive Committee of the Duma discussing the arrangements for the future. At that hour agreement had been reached. The Workmen's Committee insisted that the change should be radical and no compromise, and that the question whether



there should be a Constitutional Monarchy or a Republic should be decided by universal suffrage. The Duma Committee held in their turn that order should be completely re-established before the elections were held. The conditions for the transition period were agreed upon. Later in the day the Executive of the Duma published a list of members of the new Cabinet.

The Premier was Prince Lvov, the famous president of the Union of the *Zemstvos*; M. Miliukoff, the leader of the Constitutional Democrats and perhaps the finest mind in Russia, became Minister for Foreign Affairs; M. Kerensky, a brilliant young Socialist lawyer, became Minister of Justice; M. Gutchkoff, formerly president of the third Duma, became Minister of War. These were the leading spirits of the new Government, who issued a strangely idealistic appeal to their fellow-citizens. It ran as follows:—

“CITIZENS,

“The Provisional Executive Committee of the Duma, with the aid and support of the garrison of the capital and its inhabitants, has now triumphed over the noxious forces of the old *régime* in such a measure as to enable it to proceed to the more stable organisation of the executive power. With this object, the Provisional Committee has appointed as Ministers of the first National Cabinet men whose past political and public activity assures them the confidence of the country.” (The list of names appeared here.)

“The new Cabinet will adopt the following principles as the basis of its policy:—

“(1) An immediate general amnesty for all political and religious offences, including terrorist acts, military revolts, and agrarian crimes.

“(2) Freedom of speech, of the press, of association and labour organisation, and freedom to strike, with an extension of these liberties to officials and troops in so far as military and technical conditions permit.

“(3) The abolition of all social, religious, and racial restrictions.

“(4) Immediate preparations for the summoning of a Constituent Assembly, which, with universal suffrage as a basis, shall establish the Governmental *régime* and the Constitution of the country.

“(5) The substitution for the police of a national militia, with elective heads and subject to the self-governing bodies.

“(6) Communal elections to be carried out on the basis of universal suffrage.

“(7) The troops that have taken part in the revolutionary movement shall not be disarmed, but they are not to leave Petrograd.

“(8) While severe military discipline must be maintained on active service, all restrictions upon soldiers in the enjoyment of social rights granted to other citizens are to be abolished.

“The Provisional Government wishes to add that it has no intention of taking advantage of the war conditions to delay the realisation of the above-mentioned measures of reform.”

This was a broad enough charter of liberty. Even soldiers to have the privilege of striking “so far as military and technical conditions permit!” Universal suffrage, including women presumably, for Russia had its “new women” long before the rest of the world. The abolition of all tests. One test had yet to be swept away. The Tsar still remained. He seems to have wandered about in a special

train during those days. At one time he was near the capital, but the railway officials informed him that the line was blocked. He retraced his steps and approached Moscow. Finally he came to rest at Pskoff, about halfway between Petrograd and Riga, the headquarters of the Northern army. There he met General Ruszky, and the Duma had now requested the generals to persuade the Tsar to abdicate. The declaration of the Provisional Government assumed the non-existence of the Tsar, and hence they had to get rid of him. The majority of the generals fulfilled the request of the Duma, and the Tsar learned from Ruszky that he was entirely deserted. He wished to abdicate in favour of his little son, and this would have been a congenial selection to the Duma, who could have appointed a Regent. But the Labour delegates had refused to agree to this, and hence the Tsar signed his abdication in favour of the Grand Duke Michael. The document was a noble piece of writing, and nothing so became Nicholas as his resignation of his great powers. "We have recognised that it is for the good of the country that we should abdicate the Crown of the Russian State and lay down the supreme power." These humiliating words must have cost the Tsar an effort. He was not deficient in great qualities, and perhaps his deficiency as a ruler is a universal deficiency. Few, if any, men are equal to the unlimited power he wielded. The act of abdication went on to include the Tsarevitch, and bequeathed the throne to his brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch. It concluded: "We call upon all faithful sons of the fatherland to fulfil their sacred and patriotic duty in obeying the Tsar at the painful moment of national trials, and to aid him, together with the representatives of the nation, to conduct the Russian State in the way of prosperity and glory. May God help Russia!"

The Grand Duke Michael, after a consultation with the people's representatives, made a declaration from the throne declaring his firm resolve to accept the supreme power only if that should be the desire of the people, and should be made known by a plebiscite. The people's representatives were to choose the form of government, and he would abide by it. The Grand Duke Nicholas had been appointed by the Tsar as head of the army; but the people felt that it was part of the old *régime*, and demanded that some one unconnected with the Romanoffs should be chosen. Alexeieff virtually, though not actually, Commander-in-Chief from the middle of 1915, accordingly became head of the army he had guided with so much distinction.

The Grand Duke Michael was a man of middle age, a Liberal, and a popular personality. He had been banished the Court for a marriage with the daughter of a Jewish merchant, who had been the wife of a brother officer. The Revolution found in him a strong and wise servant, and the speed with which order began to return was not a little due to his influence. The Grand Duke Cyril, the head of the Marines in Petrograd, was another royal prince who put himself at the disposal of the Revolution. And the Grand Duke Nicholas acted with Alexeieff in persuading the Tsar to abdicate.

Food at once began to filter through to the capital; prices fell by two-thirds; the old police were speedily put in custody, and their place was taken by a militia under the zemstvos and municipalities. The governors of provinces, who were an essential part of the old tyranny, were quietly deposed, and the zemstvos, which had so long concentrated and expressed the aspirations of Russia, took over the control of local affairs. The Revolution was surely the most bloodless in history. In Petrograd, it is true, there were over 2,000 casualties; but in Moscow there were only



about twelve, and elsewhere there was no trouble. In Finland the Revolution came with no bloodshedding. The Governor, M. Seyn, who had been so cordially and deservedly hated, was deposed; and M. Roditchieff, a popular Cadet leader, took his place. The constitution of the duchy was restored, and Finland in a moment became a help and not a weakness to Russia, cutting away from the pro-German party of Sweden the chief plank of their platform. The Labour Committee had in it elements which might have led to grave trouble, but the main body fortunately followed the lead of M. Tcheidze (a Caucasian Social Democrat), and accepted the compromise that ever comes so hard to Russians. Kerensky formed the link between this extremist section and the Duma, and when one reflects upon the seriousness of the situation and the poignancy of the ills the people had suffered under the old *régime*, it must be agreed that these anxious days were passed in a way that reflects the highest credit upon all concerned.

Nicholas Romanoff, as the former Tsar was called, and his consort were ordered to be placed under arrest. He was met at Tsarskoe Selo on Thursday, 22nd March, by General Korniloff, who had already placed the ex-Tsaritza under arrest there. They were allowed to retain their servants; and, indeed, the household at Tsarskoe Selo numbered over one hundred. This action was typical of the conduct of the Revolution in its first phase. There were few acts of violence. M. Kerensky at the very outset announced that the ex-Ministers should have open and fair trial. Sukhomlinoff, the ex-War Minister, was being taken into custody when some one demanded that his epaulettes be taken off. The general himself tore them off, and walked away with his guards.

Some of the revenges of the Revolution were piquant. Old people, worn out with the hardships of Siberia, returned to Russia. Dwellers in the horrible prisons of Petrograd again saw the light of day. But one of these, the enlightened Bourtsseff, who had returned to Petrograd during the war in defiance of the advice of his friends, and had found his way to the torture chambers of the political prison, was released and put in charge of the archives of the secret police. There can have been few changes like this in history. Others who had suffered for their opinions and their deeds in attestation of them came back to a sort of new world.

The Provisional Government made its arrangements rapidly for the elections, for its own abdication, and for establishing the new *régime*. But it was impossible to achieve all this in less than a month or two. Meanwhile, the various other Governments and the United States entered into relations with the Provisional Government. The British Government, on Thursday, 22nd March, welcomed the new *régime*. Mr. Lloyd George spoke warmly and well; Mr. Bonar Law, who has no arts for such occasions, showed to less advantage, and merely served to throw into higher relief the speech of the former Premier, Mr. Asquith.

The Prime Minister's telegram to the Russian Premier was a finer document. "The Revolution," he said, "reveals the fundamental truth that the war is at bottom a struggle for popular government as well as for liberty. It shows that through the war the principle of liberty, which is the only sure safeguard of peace in the world, has already won one resounding victory. It is the sure promise that the Prussian military autocracy, which began the war and which is still the only barrier to peace, will itself before long be overthrown." The Russian people would be strengthened "in their resolve to prosecute the war until the last stronghold of tyranny on the Continent of Europe is destroyed, and the free peoples of all lands

can unite to secure for themselves and their children the blessings of fraternity and peace."

Germany seems to have understood the change more clearly than any other Government. There were some riots, especially in Southern Germany. But Germany at once set herself to attack the Russian armies in the field. A wave of enthusiasm passed over the world. America welcomed the change, and set her course nearer the war towards which she had been shaping. The German armies were falling back on the West, and Hindenburg saw his only chance lay in taking advantage of the disorganisation of the Revolution. He had correctly read the trend of events, though the Allies failed to see it. In spite of the order and good sense of the first acts of the Revolution, it proved to be Germany's first indisputable triumph. She had forced the war upon Russia at a pace and on a scale under which its political organisation gave way; and though it did not immediately appear, the Revolution had the same effect as the treacherous intrigues of the old *régime*. It put an end to the Russian war effort.

## XVII. THE CAPTURE OF BAGDAD.

AFTER the fall of Kut there was a prolonged lull in the operations in Mesopotamia. It was not a period of inactivity, but the Commander-in-Chief had savoured the folly of the hectic attempts to relieve Kut, and he was determined not to move until his little army was fully ensured against all emergencies. The crying need of the earlier phases had been transport, and Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Maude, who was appointed to the supreme command on 28th August, refused to advance until his army was assured of supplies and ammunition. Maude remained at Basra while the transport system was organised. The British force was now four full divisions strong, but the 13th Division lay about Amara until the end of November.

During May the Turks had evacuated the Sinn positions, and these had been occupied by the British, who were there fed by a light railway from Sheik Saad. On the left bank of the river the troops lay some eleven miles farther east before the Sanna-i-Yat lines.

Sir Stanley Maude was not only a great general, but also a great man. He had to forge an instrument of victory out of an army which had recently only known defeat, suffering, and shame. He trained, organised, and inspired his little force, and when the moment came struck with supreme insight at the Turks' weak spot. As he developed his plans, a spectator had the unusual experience of reading praise of the skill of a British general in German newspapers. Indeed, the German military critics were hard put to it to show that there was no need for anxiety while they applauded the obvious ability with which the situation was handled.

The problem of the campaign was not the same as that which faced General Lake, Sir Stanley's predecessor. The Turks had withdrawn their line to the northern bank of the river at Es Sinn and covered Kut with positions, making a rough arc from the bend west of Megasis to the loop of the river west of Kut. The Sanna-i-Yat positions on the north of the river, an entrenched system across the narrow gap between the vast swamp, the Suwaicha Marsh, and the river, were still maintained. But no attempt was made to test the new Turkish positions, and during the summer



and autumn they remained unmolested. While this was proceeding, an expedition had to be undertaken for the relief of the left flank of the British position in Lower Mesopotamia. On 11th September a column moved out from Nasarijeh and dispersed the force operating about As Sahilan with heavy loss. On the Karun and Bushire (Persia) sectors there were no important movements, and before Maude began his advance on the Tigris he had inspected and assured himself of the safety of his flanks.

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Yet, while the problem of Sir Stanley Maude was simplified by the withdrawal from the Es Sinn position, it was complicated by the Russian withdrawal in Persia. General Baratoff, the commander, had been near the Persian frontier on the Bagdad road when Kut fell. He had even sent a small force of Cossacks over the trackless hills to the British headquarters. But during the summer months his small force was pressed back towards Hamadan, and Sir Stanley Maude had to face the fact that he could look for no support from the Russians in his advance up the Tigris.

The Grand Duke Nicholas had been methodically developing his campaign in Armenia when Kut surrendered, and he had made valiant efforts to bring pressure to bear on the Turkish flank from Persia. Trebizond fell in mid-April, but Yudenef could not establish communications between the Black Sea port and Erzerum. The southern column was able to seize Mamakhatan, halfway to Erzincan, at the end of May, but a vigorous counter-attack compelled it to withdraw. The Russians were thus securely held at the ends of their line, and the centre, in the Upper Choruk valley, had never yet been cleared.

During the lull in Mesopotamia the Grand Duke fought at a disadvantage. The Turks were not only flushed with their success at Kut, but were able to concentrate in Armenia without the preoccupations of a threat on the Tigris. But Yudenitch after a pause renewed his advance, recovered Mamakhatan on 12th July, captured almost two whole battalions, and three days later cleared the Choruk valley by the capture of Baiburt. His centre could now draw supplies from Trebizond. Ten days later the southern infantry column were but a day's march from Erzincan, the Turks' advanced base, and the cavalry entered the town in the evening.

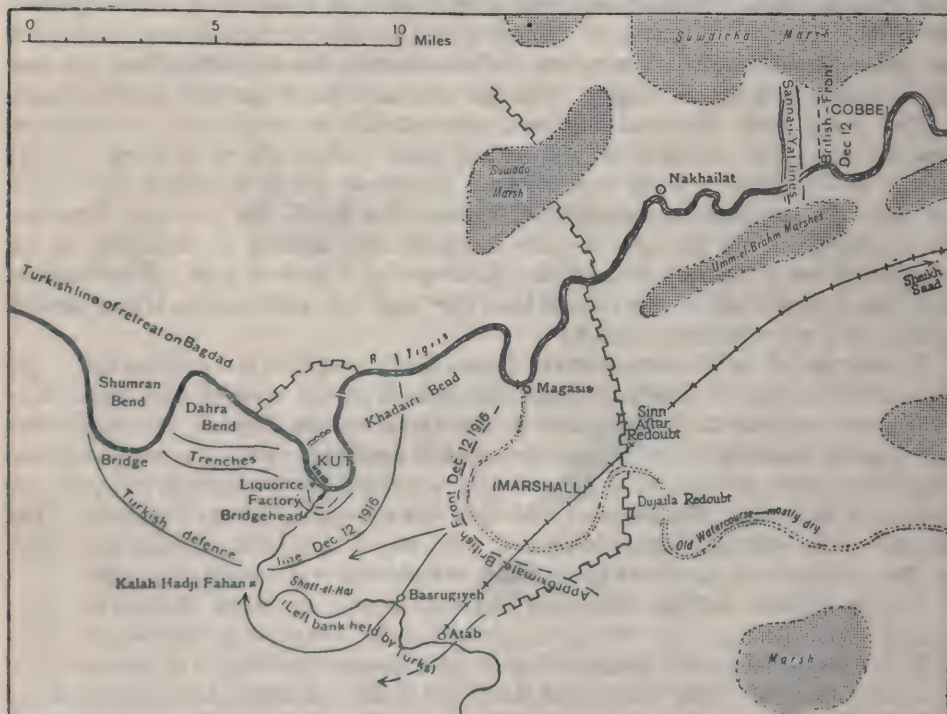
On the extreme left the Russians had been advancing below Mush when their comrades took Baiburt. It was in this area that the Turks counter-attacked. The Turks recovered Mush and Bitlis. But on 25th August the Russians reacted along the whole of the left flank, recaptured Mush and Bitlis, and below Lake Van captured over 2,000 men of the 4th Division. They were able to do little more, for the drain of the main Russian offensive was beginning to tell. But the positions gained were responsible for the small force—two weak divisions—left on the Tigris.

\* \* \* \* \*

Taking full view of the circumstances, General Maude felt that the surest method of dealing with the Russian situation, and a threatened attack on the Euphrates, was by moving in force up the Tigris. On 13th December General Cobbe opened a heavy bombardment against the Sanna-i-Yat positions, and under cover of this assault General Marshall, with the cavalry and 3rd Corps, marched during the night towards the Shatt-el-Hai, the old bed of the Tigris which enters the new river course at Kut, and seized several miles of the western bank. At daybreak of the following day infantry and cavalry were across the river. They at once drove the Turks past Kala Haji Fahan, within two miles of the Tigris, and the infantry advanced on

the eastern bank to conform. The airmen caught the Turks in bright moonlight trying to tow away their pontoon bridges, for the purposes of providing reinforcements, and destroyed the pontoons. On the two following days the British lines were pressed, on both sides of the Shatt-el-Hai, to a point only three-quarters of a mile from the Tigris. The left flank was extended, and patrols were operating as far as Shumran.

Meanwhile Cobbe's force continued to bombard the Sanna-i-Yat position and maintain the pretence of an attack. The Turks seem to have been completely deceived, and detained the bulk of their force there. For ten days the troops devoted their attention to clearing the bend of the river west of Kut, and, after inflicting heavy losses on the Turks and reducing their holding to a few hundred yards,



The Recapture of Kut.

they reached the southern bank of the river, the Turks getting across during the night of the 18th. The defence had been conducted very skilfully, but it proved also extremely costly, and there were over 1,000 Turks killed in the operation. By this stroke Maude secured the one avenue of communication between the Tigris and the Euphrates, and cut off the Turks from a fruitful area for supplies.

A week later the direct attack upon Kut was begun astride the Hai. The approaches had been methodically entrenched, and the attackers had to seize trench by trench. On the west bank of the Hai the struggle was most violent, and the trenches changed hands three times before it finally was won. On 28th January 600 yards of the third and fourth lines were gained, and there were 950 Turkish corpses found after the action. The struggle for the trenches east of the Hai con-



tinued from 25th January to the 3rd February, when the British, after a long drawn-out and stubborn struggle, obtained the southern bank of the Tigris. There were found 800 Turkish dead after the assault of the 3rd. On the same day more trenches were carried west of Hai, but it was almost a week before the line of the Tigris up to the liquorice factory was reached. On the 9th this building, which had played so notable a rôle in Townshend's defence and later in the Turkish line, was carried by assault after it had been almost reduced to dust. The 62nd Punjabis entered it on the following morning, and were able to command the mouth of the Hai. At the same time the Turks drew a cordon south of the river from the liquorice factory up to Shumran. But after five days' fighting the position was won on the 15th, the Turks showing, for the first time, a disposition to surrender. A number of them had come hither from El Arish, after the Turkish defeat there on 21st December. By the clearing of the bend of the river west of Kut the town was now in a pocket of the British lines, and it must have been obvious that its days were numbered; and the Staff saw that the positions at Sanna-i-Yat (or Falahiyyeh, as it was frequently called) would be outflanked from the west, and the forces holding the lines there would be in danger of being cut off.

Troops from Sanna-i-Yat began to be withdrawn and thrown into the defence of the positions farther west. General Maude had now laid his mine, and it was but necessary to fire it. He knew Kut could be had at his own time, but he made a bid to secure a true military success. He recommenced the attack at Sanna-i-Yat, knowing full well that by so doing the chances were that he would attract more troops hither, and so make the ground ripe in the west for an assault across the Tigris. For the Turks, the abandonment of Sanna-i-Yat meant the surrender of positions of which they could not see the end. Yet to stand there was to risk the surrounding and capture of their troops from the west. Sir Stanley Maude was now to reap the profits of the dilemma in which he had placed his opponent. In February the two front lines at Sanna-i-Yat were penetrated, but almost the whole of the ground was recovered by the Turks in a series of counter-attacks. Five days later, after a long-continued bombardment, about half a mile of the two Turkish front lines was secured and maintained in spite of six furious counter-attacks. But by this time the enemy had brought eastward a considerable strength of troops from the positions higher up the river, so that when, on the 23rd, an attempt was made to cross at Shumran, nine miles west of Kut, it was immediately successful. The advance parties consisted of Gurkhas and Norfolks, who, with admirable tenacity, covered the sappers while they built their bridge across the river. The bridge was completed in eight hours in spite of the current, which had a force of five knots. It was a fine undertaking to construct nearly a quarter-mile bridge in so short a time.

Once it was done the tenure of Kut was over. Troops were poured across the river, and, clearing the Shumran peninsula, advanced against the Turkish lines of retreat as the attack at Sanna-i-Yat was being renewed. But the Turks recognised the position, and the lines north of the river which had resisted so long and to such purpose were abandoned, and the British pressed forward after the Turks. On the 24th Kut and all the ground east of it was occupied by the British, and the Turks were making all speed towards Azizie. The town itself was of little importance, but its position at the junction of the Hai and the natural defences in the vicinity made it at once the key to Lower Mesopotamia, and also of the ground beyond up

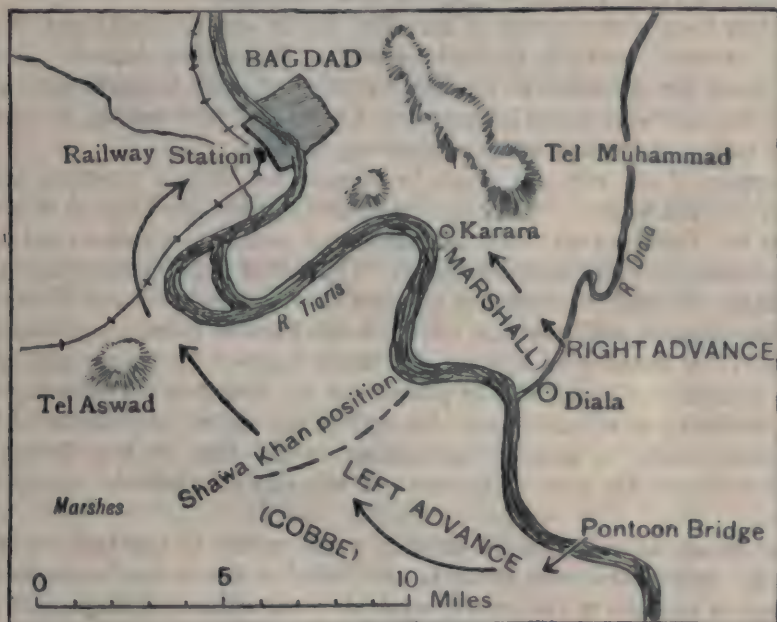
to the neighbourhood of Bagdad. Sir Stanley Maude disposed of a more considerable force than had ever been wielded by a British general in this area. He had taken some thousands of prisoners in the last few days, but the bulk of the enemy had got away. Indeed, the retirement from Sanna-i-Yat was a masterly operation. Between midnight on the 23rd and eight o'clock the next morning they fell back to beyond Shumran. The troops were sent after the Turks with all speed. Khalil Pasha attempted to hold the 14th Division in the Shumran bend; but the troops—Hants, Norfolks, 62nd and 67th Punjabis—advanced very gallantly against a cool and stubborn resistance, and the Turks broke and fell back. The actions of the 24th and 25th were confused engagements. The cavalry had their chance, but failed to take it. The armoured motor batteries wrought great havoc. But the Turkish rearguards fought well. An intermediate base had been formed at Baghela, and a rearguard attempted to make a stand there. But it was roughly swept aside. Valuable stores were captured, and the pursuit continued. A naval flotilla—the *Tarantula*, *Mantis*, and *Moth*—took up the chase on the 26th, passed the infantry, and turned the pursuit into a rout. The ships were lustily cheered. Aeroplanes were also pressed into service for the harassing of the enemy. In five days the Turks had been driven over fifty miles up the river, half-way to Bagdad, and the British had captured 4,300 prisoners, 28 guns, 19 trench mortars, 11 machine guns, vast quantities of small arms and ammunition, 3 ships, 2 tugs, 10 barges, much bridging material and live stock. Some British prisoners were released. The *Firefly*, lost in Townshend's retreat, was recovered.

At Azizie the Turks were encountered by the cavalry on the 27th; but they fell back during the night. Maude ordered a pause there to reorganise; but on 4th March the advance was resumed. At Lajj, four miles from Ctesiphon, the Turkish rearguards were encountered by the 13th Hussars on 5th March, and the cavalry suffered heavily in attacking them. But there was no attempt to do more than check the advance, and the Turks fell back once more at night. The following day the advance guards passed through Ctesiphon, where lay the ruins of the palace of Chosroes. The position there had been prepared for defence with the greatest care, but the pursuit of the Turks had been too resolute to allow them time to take up their positions. That night the cavalry bivouacked at Bani, just below where the Diala River imposes a barrier across the line of advance at its junction with the Tigris. The position astride the Tigris was some eleven miles from Bagdad, and there the only determined resistance was made to the British troops. The Diala at this point is an unfordable stream. An attempt was first made to break through the position of the Diala. On the night of the 7th, in bright moonlight, the pontoons were launched by the 6th King's Own in face of a heavy fire. The storming-party on the first pontoon were shot; those on the second survived to half-way across the river; and the third was sunk when almost across. The attempts were continued, but without success. On the following night the attempt was renewed by the Loyal North Lancashires after a heavy bombardment, which raised such clouds of dust from the dry soil that some seventy men succeeded in crossing before the Turks could see what was happening. The heroic attempts to go to the assistance of the little band across the river were in vain. The cloud of dust had lifted, and pontoon after pontoon was launched and manned, only to ride helplessly on the river with its burden of dead.

The detachment across the river were meanwhile fighting for their lives. On



the northern bank was a newly-built river work which formed an almost perfect lunette. Towards this the British troops bombed their way, and there defended themselves for twenty-four hours against all attacks. When daylight came the weakness of their position could be fully seen. They lay behind the improvised redoubt on a small foothold of land with their backs to the river. The British artillery while daylight lasted covered the approaches to the work with a heavy barrage ; but they could give little help to the forty men who lay undaunted, but with little hope of surviving. The Turks, who certainly did not lack courage, at midnight (of the 9th) topped the redoubt ; but the Lancashire men fought coolly and saved themselves once more. Yet their position was not only hazardous : it seemed also useless. The Diala lay across the path of the army advancing upon Bagdad. Unless it could be crossed, the old war of entrenchments might return,



The Capture of Bagdad.

and the brilliant successes of General Maude might fail of the crowning success they deserved. In this juncture troops were sent across the Tigris below the Diala. Both infantry and cavalry were included in the force under Cobbe which moved up the right bank of the Tigris, and took the Turks in enfilade. They were able to cross the river beyond the mouth of the Diala, and under this threat the Turks began their retreat. Marshall's column launched their bridges across the Diala once more, and started on their pursuit. The last formidable obstacle between the British and Bagdad had been forced, and the troops pressed on to Bagdad. They had kept an average of seven miles a day for fifteen days, and were soon to reap their reward. The final stand in defence of Bagdad was made a few miles below the city on a position athwart the Tigris. There, on the 10th, an engagement was fought, and while the 38th and 39th Brigades attacked in front, the 40th were advancing on the flank of the line. On the morning of the 11th the Turkish

trenches were found to be unoccupied. A general advance was ordered, and about 5 A.M. the station at Bagdad was occupied by a half company of the Black Watch, under Lieutenant Houston. On the left bank the Herts Yeomanry, 10th Lancers, and 32nd Cavalry rode into Bagdad. The cavalry rode through the city, and during the day captured Kaziman, about four miles to the north.

The entry into the city of the Caliphs was characteristic of the British and the East. The crowd poured out to meet the British troops—Arabs, Jews, Persians, and Armenians; unveiled women and children came out in holiday clothes; balconies and roofs were covered by cheering people. The troops had gone through three days' fighting after a long and hot march. Dusty, unshaven, weary, they still represented the victorious force which does not love show, but endeavours by all means to secure success. The King's Own had deserved their position at the head of the infantry by their glorious engagement on the Diala.

There had been some looting in the city, but it was promptly put down, and order was restored. Outside Bagdad some 300 Turks were buried. There were captured about 500 wounded in the rapid retirement, and 300 prisoners were also taken. In Bagdad were found large stores of arms and ammunition, a considerable amount of rolling stock, and much engineering material.

The capture of the city did much to redeem the British prestige, which had suffered by the fall of Kut. Although its tenure implied the holding of a city 560 miles from the Persian Gulf, with no substantial communications in between, the political advantages were extremely great. The fall of Bagdad resounded throughout the East. It even had its repercussion in the West, for the Berlin-Bagdad Railway was doomed while Britain occupied the Eastern terminus. Militarily, the advantage of the capture of Bagdad was more vague. The aim of all armies is not the destruction or occupation of places, but the defeat of the opposing armies; and the possibility of a decision lay implicit in the secure occupation of Bagdad. It was a great prize, the greatest secured up to that time by any British general during the war, and the manner in which it was captured afforded every hope for the future.

General Maude at once issued a striking proclamation to the Arabs in the name of the King. With the revolt of the Grand Sherif of Mecca the chance was offered to the Allies of promoting the growth of Arab Nationalism. This project must be kept in mind in considering the proclamation at Bagdad, which was the symbol and centre of the great days of the Arabs.

"Since the days of Hulagu," so ran the proclamation, "your city and your lands have been subject to the tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunk in desolation, and your forefathers and yourselves have groaned in bondage, your sons have been carried off to wars not of your seeking, your wealth has been stripped from you by unjust men, and squandered in distant places.

"In the days of Midhat the Turks have talked of reforms, yet do not the ruins and wastes of to-day testify the vanity of those promises?

"It is the wish not only of my King and his peoples, but it is also the wish of the great nations with whom he is in alliance, that you should prosper even as in the past, when your lands were fertile, when your ancestors gave to the world literature, science, and art, and when Bagdad City was one of the wonders of the world. . . .



"In Hedjaz the Arabs have expelled the Turks and Germans who oppressed them, and proclaimed the Sherif Hussain as their king, and his lordship rules in independence and freedom, and is the ally of the nations who are fighting against the powers of Turkey and Germany; so indeed are the noble Arabs, the Lords of Koweit, Nejd, and Asir. . . .

"I am commanded to invite you, through your nobles and elders and representatives, to participate in the management of your civil affairs, in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British army, so that you may be united with your kinsmen in North, South, East, and West in realising the aspirations of your race."

The wording of this proclamation, attributed to Sir Mark Sykes, was in the Oriental vein best suited to the circumstances. But to the soldiers who had so gallantly won the right to publish it the proclamation seemed to do scant justice to a very skilful, courageous, and honourable enemy. But it was apposite to the moment, and served to crystallise in perfect literary form the true aims of the Allies.

#### XVIII. THE UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE CAMPAIGN.

DURING January the British Admiralty established a new minefield from the Yorkshire coast to Jutland, and extending down to the last of the German islands which make a thin fringe off the coastal waters. The fact that this was not announced in the British press, but found its way back to England by means of foreign newspapers, and the coincidence that it was known about the time when the German destroyers from Zeebrugge were manifesting their activity, tended to represent the measure as a sort of outpost against vagrant enemy craft. And this was clearly one effect of the minefield. It tended to narrow the North Sea northern exit to Danish territorial waters, and in this way offered a great help to the British navy in its work of policing the seas.

But it was chiefly a measure to limit the freedom of action of the German submarines. The North Sea is a shallow basin, and mines would present a deadly risk to any submarine. It might pass under the field safely once or twice, but not three times. And to avoid the risk, the vessels again would be driven to cling to the Danish territorial waters. During December some 400,000 tons of shipping had been sunk, and it needs no elaboration to make it clear that the Allies could not put up with so heavy a loss for an indefinite time. All and every means must be taken to cut down the losses to the lowest figure. On 29th November Admiral Jellicoe went to the Admiralty, and Sir David Beatty was given command of the Grand Fleet. It was the contention of some critics that he favoured the mining of the German submarines in their harbours, and would have risked everything to annihilate the German fleet at Jutland in order that this might be accomplished. For it is capital ships which ultimately protect minefields, and no such inshore blockade could be maintained until the German fleet was completely crushed.

The German High Seas Fleet had made a sortie into the North Sea on 19th August, accompanied by Zeppelins. But having made the demonstration, and found the British fleet ready, they retired. The light cruisers *Nottingham* and

*Falmouth* were sunk by submarines in following the Germans, and it was only an emotional compensation that E 23 (Lieutenant-Commander R. Turner) got two torpedoes home on a battleship of the *Nassau* class, and sent her limping badly to her base.

The chances of enemy destroyers achieving any success were almost negligible. They merely fired off a few shells, and then disappeared. Such was the raid on the night between 22nd and 23rd January. The ten or a dozen destroyers forming the Zeebrugge flotilla steamed out from their base either to avoid being frozen in or to rejoin the main High Seas Fleet, and they were speeding northwards when they were caught off the Dutch coast by light British forces. It was a pitch dark night, and the brisk encounter that followed was confused. The enemy scattered, not, however, before one was sunk. The same flotilla, probably hastening away, was engaged near Schouwen Bank, also off the Dutch coast, by a British destroyer flotilla, and one of the latter received an enemy torpedo. As it was severely damaged, the crew were taken off, and the vessel was sunk. The German flagship, V 69, limped into the Dutch port Ymuiden the following day. It was badly damaged, as was obvious to any one, and the deck was splashed with blood. V 69 was a large new boat, and it presented a sad view, with its steering gear shot away, its funnel and masts levelled, and a bad gash in its side where a ram had pierced the armour. It carried several men badly wounded and some dead bodies, including that of the commodore, Captain Schultz.

Of more spectacular interest, though of as little importance, was the raid two nights later on the Suffolk coast. Two star shells were fired and a number of live shells. Only a few of them reached land. The enemy clearly was suffering from nerves. No casualties were caused, and there was very little damage. The vessel disappeared in a few minutes, without leaving time to the patrol vessels to come up. It could not have expected to do any military good, and to prevent such small holes in the British net was of little value. The submarine menace was of very different importance. The United Kingdom depends upon imports for food, and the Western Allies were all dependent upon the British transport. The British effort in France could not have had its full effect without the safety of the cross-Channel communications.

Hence the British Admiralty already in December was beginning to regard the submarine campaign with critical interest. But towards the end of January the Allies had more reason for anxiety. The announcement was made that British hospital ships would be sunk if they plied between France and England. This monstrous declaration was said to be due to the fact that the Allies had used hospital ships for the transport of troops and munitions. The British Government at once declared that the charge was false; and it is obvious that the grounds upon which it was made were such as would justify almost anything. How could a submarine commander, regarding a ship from the surface of the water at a distance of, say, four miles, form any trustworthy view of the character of the people on deck? Yet this was the chief sort of evidence relied upon. It is true that once or twice during the war it was found more convenient to turn a large hospital ship back into a freight vessel; but the marks were changed. The name might have led spies to think that the vessel was purporting to be both a hospital and a freight vessel. But there was clearly no case for the charge, and the onus of a decision lay upon the Germans. It would, indeed, have been a perfectly legitimate ruse of war to have



changed hospital ships into freight vessels and back as often as possible. Provided the ships when plying as freight vessels did not bear the distinguishing marks of a hospital ship, it was perfectly allowable to confuse submarine commanders by the identity of the liners under different rôles. It can never be admitted as a rule of warfare on land or sea that a wayfarer must prove he is *not* a belligerent enemy. The assailant must *prove he is*.

The announcement was not long left to astonish the world, for within a few days another proclamation was made which completely put the first into the shade. The Germans declared that in an area round Great Britain and Ireland, France, North Africa, Egypt, Italy, and Salonika they would sink all vessels without warning. The enemy press was full of the most enthusiastic boasts of what was to happen to the United Kingdom. The Chancellor had long been fighting against the prestige and influence of Tirpitz. Now it seemed the latter had won.

At the main Reichstag Committee sitting on 31st January the Chancellor made a statement announcing the new campaign. The rejection of the Peace offer, he said, meant that Germany had been challenged to fight to the end. She now accepted. He had before refused to agree to unrestricted submarine warfare, although he held that every means calculated to shorten war is the humanest policy. But now the moment had arrived. They had more submarines, and, therefore, a better chance of success. There had been a bad corn harvest throughout the world, and hence the Allies were already in difficulties. A few days before Marshal von Hindenburg had informed him that "our front stands firm on all sides. We have everywhere the requisite reserves. The spirit of the troops is good and confident. The military situation as a whole permits us to accept all the consequences\* an unrestricted U-boat war may bring about; and as this U-boat war in all the circumstances is the means to injure our enemies most grievously, it must be begun."

This is a striking speech for many reasons. It is a novel principle of morality that the quickest way to end a quarrel is the humanest. This, however, is not so novel coming from the Chancellor who had already stood before the world as the apologist of "necessity knows no law." The cryptic utterance of Hindenburg is more interesting. It is first to be noticed that it abandons the hope of a decision in the field. This in itself is surely a most significant fact. Its very temperateness makes it impressive, for although we know that only a few weeks before Hindenburg was lamenting the breakdown in *moral* of his troops at Verdun, the present statement was studiously calm. The statement of the German Commander-in-Chief, however, was only quoted by the Chancellor, and it was given to the world, clearly, in a special form.

A more interesting statement was brought to light a little later. It was a paper of secret instructions from the military authorities, and is worth putting on record, not only for the light it throws on the German view of the military situation, but for the perfectly trustworthy reflection of the atmosphere of Germany and the means by which the German people are ruled. It runs as follows:—

\* This referred to the danger of Denmark or Holland declaring war against Germany. It was largely for fear of such a development that the German Staff, who had been discussing the feasibility of unrestricted submarine warfare since the preceding October, decided that the campaign could not begin until the Rumanian campaign was finished and the troops brought back to the West. Rumania proved more obdurate than had been expected, and it was soon clear that the troops could not be transferred to the West before the beginning of February. [Ludendorff, *My Memories*, pp. 312-14.]

"GENERAL COMMAND, 7TH ARMY CORPS,  
MÜNSTER, February 1917.

"NOTICE. TO NEWSPAPER AND EDITORIAL OFFICES, ETC.

*"Confidential. Not to be copied. Secret.*

"Newspapers are requested to act on the following advice when discussing unlimited U-boat war :—

"(1.) Opinions regarding the usefulness of the measures and of the time chosen after the decision has been made would have the effect of weakness and lack of harmony, would encourage the enemy, and perhaps induce wavering neutrals to come in.

"(2.) For the beginning of the concluding struggle absolute internal union is essential. The determined approval of the entire people must ring out from the press.

"(3.) It is a question not of a movement of desperation—all the factors have been carefully weighed after conscientious technical naval preparation—but of the best and only means to a speedy victorious ending of the war.

"(4.) Towards America it is advisable to use the outward forms of friendliness. Unfriendliness would increase the danger of America coming in. The breaking-off of diplomatic relations, even active participation, hangs in the balance. The attitude of the press must not increase this danger.

"(5.) The navy, fully conscious of its power, enters into this new section of the war with firm confidence of the result. It is recommended that the phase be called unlimited, not ruthless, U-boat war.

"(6.) Material, personnel, and appliances are being increased and approved continuously. Trained reserves are ready.

"(7.) England's references to the perfection of her means of defence, which are intended to reassure the English people, are refuted by the good results of the last months.

"(8.) Each result is now more important, because the enemy's mercantile marine is already weakened.

"(9.) The psychological influence should not be underestimated. Fear amongst the enemy and neutrals leads to difficulties with the crews, and may induce neutrals to keep ships in harbour.

"(10.) U-boat war is now exclusively a part of the combined method of waging war, therefore a purely military matter."

In this document we see something of the workings of the German machine. It admits the desperateness of the military situation, in spite of an illogical disclaimer, in stating that the campaign "is the best and *only* means" to produce a speedy victory. And we can deduce from it the fact that German unity was far from assured, that the enemy feared the entry of the United States into the war, and that the originators of the new campaign were not wholly convinced of its chances. Yet, clearly, it was a most serious threat to the Allies. The United Kingdom had 16,000,000 tons of shipping available, and there was to be added to this the shipping of the Allies. To destroy such an amount of transport would seem to be impossible in any reasonable time; but to view the question in this way is to misconceive its importance. This shipping is necessary in peace time



for living and economic purposes. The war cast a huge additional burden on overseas transport. In the first place, all Russian grain was locked in Russia, and all the other commodities which she formerly supplied to the Allies had to be brought across the ocean. Thus the provisioning of the Western Allies alone would have been a great undertaking. But besides this—the ordinary business of peace—the exports had to be kept up and improved so far as was possible to pay for the goods the Allies bought from the New World. This was a further strain. Then, again, there was the huge traffic necessary to carry munitions, guns, metal and material for munitions across the Atlantic for the almost inexhaustible supplies needed not only for the British but also for the Allied armies. Archangel and the new ice-free port were constantly full of shipping pouring into Russia, by the only free entrance, munitions that were so badly needed. There was also the transport of troops across the Atlantic, the Channel, to Salonika, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, and the immense work of provisioning them in those places.

Transport began to be a conscious and deliberate act. People realised for the first time that it lay at the basis of civilisation. But sea transport was part of the military machine. The Allied communications lay largely on the sea, and even a small diminution of shipping must be felt. It would mean hardship for the civilian population, and must eventually weaken even the armies. By the end of January 1917 the German submarines had sunk about 4,000,000 tons of shipping. This was not, of course, all British, or even all Allied. And it was not all *net* loss. As the effects of the submarines began to be appreciated, all the nations involved set themselves to repairing the losses. The net loss of the United Kingdom was less than 1,000,000 tons—a serious amount under the circumstances, but not a loss that affected the *being* of the nation or of the nation's share in the war, though it did affect its *well-being*.

There was indeed no absolute reply to the submarines. It seems incredible that this should be so. We might have thought that submarine signalling, and the development of physics to render a submarine visible through water, would have solved the problem and made fighting under water a recognised part of naval activity. Some day this development must appear. But it did not make its appearance during the war. The means of dealing with the submarines were many and ingenious. There were a host of tiny craft of the lowest draught which steamed at high speed and carried a gun sufficiently heavy to break the thin skin of a submarine. These small boats kept the sea at all times, as did also the drifters which were used as mine-sweepers. Over a hundred of the latter were constantly employed in the Adriatic; the Italians were loud in their praises of the heroic but homely British fishermen who so often carried their lives in their hands for the sake of clearing away a menace to Italian shipping. There were booms at the harbour mouths, mines off the coast and in the North Sea, nets connected with contact mines, electrified cables, and the splendid torpedo boat destroyers.

But the conditions under which the submarines acted were all in favour of their success. The later submarines\* were large craft, and carried a gun of 4 or 6 inch calibre. They had four or six torpedo tubes, and carried a fair supply of torpedoes. They could remain away from their base a month or six weeks. Some of them

\* In October 1916 cruiser-submarine warfare had begun. Vessels were stopped and searched. This approach to legal warfare enjoyed a brief success, but its limitations led to the adoption of the "unrestricted" campaign.

seem to have laid mines as far as the Cape and Aden. One or two went as far afield as New York, and stayed off the port sinking vessels for several days, until it became evident that America was not inclined to be appreciative. Great submarines capable of such exploits were formidable weapons, and the only thing which kept them in check to any extent was the pledge the Germans had given to the United States that liners and merchant vessels would not be sunk without warning and without making some provision for the safety of the passengers and crew. This concession had been won by President Wilson after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, an event which was commemorated by a holiday to school children and a medal. The callous brutality of the Germans in this episode is an experience which the civilised world will not soon forget.

The new campaign was a formal withdrawal of this pledge, and its effects were very grave for the Allies. When the Germans left themselves free to lay mines as they wished and to sink without warning, "the barred zones" became extremely dangerous places. Vessels could secure a certain amount of safety from submarines by appropriate precautions. The adoption of dazzle painting, which made it difficult to gauge the speed or size of a vessel, gave a certain amount of safety. A safeguard of greater value was the compelling a submarine to act under water. Under such conditions a submarine could not possibly have a very great success. It is true that vessels travel across the sea by paths almost as fixed as the roads of a city, and therefore submarines had only to station themselves on such paths to be sure of chances of sinking vessels. But under water the speed of the best of them was no match for the majority of above-water vessels. And hence if a submarine were sighted, a steamer could generally secure safety by flight. In any case, if the vessel would simply confine itself to sailing in a zigzag course, the submarine had no chance with a torpedo. In fact, it is known that submarine commanders rarely attempted to torpedo a vessel which was seen to be steaming in such a course. Hence any expedient which could force the submarines to remain under water and rely on torpedoes had largely solved the problem of defence.

The means by which this was achieved was simply the arming of merchant ships. It was a simple expedient, and one which seemed perfectly reasonable. From time immemorial merchant ships had been allowed to resist capture or search and to defend themselves. Germany, along with her novel theories about *francs-tireurs*, evolved one about merchant ships. According to her theory about *francs-tireurs*, no civilian was allowed to have arms. When once a German soldier appeared, the civilian was supposed to act as a statue whatever might happen. The soldier might assault his daughter or wife, might slay his children and attack himself, but the civilian could do nothing. The Hague Convention recognised the right of civilians to defend themselves, and forbade belligerents to treat them other than as combatants if they bore arms openly. The German practice was to shoot them at sight—to murder them, in fact—for it was none the less murder because done in war. Following this theory, the Germans affected to regard the armed merchant ships as *francs-tireurs*. In the case of Captain Fryatt, who was taken prisoner a year after he had apparently successfully rammed a German submarine, he was allowed none of the benefits of treatment as the captain of an auxiliary cruiser. He was tried and executed; he was a *franc-tireur*!

Neutral nations were not at one over their behaviour towards such armed ships. The United States behaved the most reasonably. But even she insisted that the



merchant ships should only be armed in the after part. The reason of this provision was clear. The inference was that if a ship was armed forward as well as aft, she might be tempted to attack and not merely defend herself. It was further insisted that to preserve the rights of a merchant ship, the vessel must only bear a gun of a certain calibre. This became extremely unreasonable when the submarines began to carry 6 or 8 inch guns. But by this time America had moved with the times. It was different with Holland, who refused to allow the status of a merchant ship to any which carried a gun at all; and even as late as January 1917 a vessel had to unship its gun and throw its ammunition overboard before it could have entry to a Dutch port.

But where the right of ships to carry guns was allowed, a great measure of immunity was enjoyed. About 75 per cent. of armed vessels escaped, whereas only about 23 per cent. unarmed vessels escaped. The reason of this was obvious. The submarine lying in wait on one of the great shipping tracks would be scanning the horizon. It would see the smoke of an approaching steamer, and would carefully examine the vessel as soon as its hull showed over the horizon to discover if it possessed a gun. If it did, the submarine at once submerged, and steamed at full speed towards the vessel, when the approximate speed would have to be estimated through the tiny eye of the periscope. If the vessel were steaming on an irregular course, the speed could not be gauged with any certainty; and even if it could be, there was no knowing when the course would be changed, and hence the steamer probably escaped scot-free. There were cases where vessels provided with wireless installations preserved themselves for months merely by acting in accordance with instructions received and steering in an irregular course. But if the vessel were unarmed, the submarine, which could steam some six knots or so more above than when beneath the water, would approach at its highest speed. It could hardly be seen before it was within range, and a few well-placed shots would finish any ordinary steamer. The use of the gun was therefore obvious. No submarine willingly risked its thin skin against the shelling of another ship, and hence the gun stole its thunder.

When the unrestricted campaign was adopted mines were used to help the submarines. It is obvious that if steamers sailed along *any* route, an almost infinite number of submarines would be needed to deal with them. The value of mines was that they tended to force merchant ships into the use of certain lanes upon which the submarine could lie in wait. The British mine-sweepers could sweep a given route clear, but there could be no certainty that as they went ahead and cleared the lines, they were not followed by German mine-laying submarines, which would lay fresh mines as fast as the old ones were swept up.

The new campaign therefore introduced an era of utter brutality, of risk to all ships which should ply in certain areas, and it constituted a challenge to humanity. The instructions already quoted prove that there were not wanting protests even in Germany. Even the long reign of Government-formed opinion, of calumny, of lies, could not wholly drown the voice of humanity, and some Germans were clearly restive. There would certainly have been more but for the fact, which Germany widely advertised, that the Allies were attempting to starve the whole German population. What was right for one belligerent must be right for all. But this case will not bear examination. To begin with, the British blockade only prevented Germany from making good the effects of her own declaration of war

She had declared war against the countries which supplied her with the bulk of the food stuffs she normally imported, and there could not be any grievance against the Allies closing the markets which might have made good the loss. Even if there might be a case here, clearly it disappears in view of the plain fact that she was feeding her cannon with the food of her people, and if the blockade had not existed, only the cannon would have fared better. Fats, milk, the nitrates to fertilise the soil, even the carbolic for hospitals, were all poured into the cannon. It was only when the war had run for a year that it was appreciated that either the insatiable cannon or the satiable human mouths could be fed; but the world could not supply both for any length of time. Towards the end of the third year of the war, want began to cast a shadow over even neutral and productive America. In a word, Germany was bolstering her war map on the milk of her babes, the fats and foods which should have fed her people. Only the perversity of logic could deem it brutal that the Allies would not feed more explosives into German cannon. Yet we have to realise that it was precisely this perversity that formed the common sense of Germany. To prevent them spreading their criminal and primitive Kultur was a crime which should be visited on any one accessible. As we have seen, there were some minds in Germany who saw the point, who appreciated the fact that their methods were brutal. These were not the less truly German on that account. But they were not popular. In Austria-Hungary the opposition was stronger. Even a secret session could not wholly silence the opposition. Count Karolyi openly spoke against the campaign. And the manner in which it was agreed to is instructive. The fact that it was settled was one argument which dragged a reluctant approval. Another was the promise that it would not require to be pursued for long—as though the murder of 10,000 was less murder than that of 1,000,000. And the fact that it alone offered peace consoled some. For Austria-Hungary was truly fighting for life. It was a hodge-podge of races controlled by force applied by two dominant powers, and the Allied peace terms threatened it with disruption. The Rumanians had to be liberated to join Rumania; the Czecho-Slovacs were to be freed; and Italia Irredenta was to go to Italy.

The reaction of neutrals was more drastic. President Wilson, who had borne with the Germans for so long, at once handed Count Bernstorff his passports and broke off diplomatic relations. China followed suit; Spain protested. Indeed, one may sum up the situation in a word: the protests were made by as many as were distant enough to be safe from Germany. She became the outlaw of nations. The bulk of Americans clamoured for war. The President, like a thorough democrat, was anxious to carry the mandate of his people into whatever course of action he pursued. That he wished to take active measures seems certain; but with a large German population and an important pacifist body, he could not go lightly to war.

Meanwhile the campaign started. Its gravity we have shown. It could be counteracted only by the measures of attack, which we have shown to be at the time inadequate and uncertain, by putting the civilian population on some system of rationing, voluntary or compulsory, or by building vessels more quickly than the Germans could destroy them. The rationing expedient was resorted to voluntarily, and efforts were made to stimulate the production of food. But with so great a proportion of its able-bodied men drawn into the army or into services—such as munition works—subsidiary to the army, the greater cultivation of the land was not easy. The army was still clamouring for belligerents, and men could not



be everywhere at once. Either shipbuilding *or* the land *or* the army could be supplied ; but not all, at any rate with ease.

The Secretary for the Admiralty, Sir Edward Carson, in introducing the Estimates on 21st February, reviewed the whole question from the Navy standpoint for the first eighteen days of the new campaign. In the first eighteen days of December, January, and February, the British, Allied, and Neutral shipping above 1,000 tons lost amounted to 201,394, 183,533, 268,671 tons respectively. This did not show a great increase from the December figures, and probably in January the Germans were preparing for their new campaign. Of British shipping alone lost in the same period, and of the same category of over 1,000 tons, the figures were 92,573, 82,158, and 169,927 respectively. The totals, including steamers of under 1,000 tons and sailing vessels, were 118 vessels of 223,322 tons, 91 vessels of 198,233 tons, and 134 vessels of 304,596 tons. This last total was very high, and would have made a total loss of some 500,000 tons in a month if the average were maintained. It was a most serious loss, but its true significance cannot be gauged except by measuring it against the total arrivals and clearances. This method of announcing the risks and losses did much to blind the Allied peoples to the seriousness of the situation. Though not successful in the German sense, the campaign constituted a menace the critical nature of which was not even suspected, except by a few officials.

One of the German papers was at this moment informing the world that "the whole sea was as if swept clean at one blow." While this was merely part and parcel of the usual rubbish with which Germany beguiled the tedium of waiting for victory, the statement of the Secretary of the German Navy, Capelle, can hardly be so easily passed by. Speaking at the same time as Sir Edward Carson, he proclaimed that the results of the campaign had passed all expectations, though he went on to say that, as the British were suppressing the figures, he could not state the actual achievement. How, then, one may ask, could he say that the results had passed all expectations? Indeed, the only inference from this statement is that the Germans had to be reassured at all costs, but that so far as he knew the figures were disappointing. He went on to state that there was no reason to suppose that one submarine had been lost. This statement was received with loud cheers, although the admiral went on to admit that "some" of the submarines had not yet returned, owing to orders, etc.

At that very moment there were survivors of the crew of at least one German submarine in England. Sir Edward Carson, in stating the reason why the submarine casualties were not announced, showed how difficult it was to be quite certain when they were sunk. As soon as they were attacked they naturally submerged, and one might infer that they had been placed *hors de combat*, whereas they would rise again. Sir Edward stated that the British fleet had had forty encounters with submarines in the eighteen days under review. One submarine was struck and forced—but able—to come to the surface. The crew were taken prisoners. That was a certain case. But eight other encounters which he described varied in the probability of their results. A destroyer struck a submarine, and was herself damaged. She felt certain the submarine was sunk, and an obstruction was later verified at the place. Another destroyer heavily rammed a submarine. And so on.

It is clearly bad policy to announce as certainly sunk what is probably not sunk, but only slightly damaged. And there are obvious disadvantages in making the announcement even when it is certain. For the alternative is that the submarine

does not return. The Germans never knew what was the cause of its non-appearance. They could not tell whether it was lost from an error in design or navigation, or whether from attack. If it could certainly be known that defective construction was the cause of loss, the Germans would have been supplied with an important piece of information. Submarines are very delicate in construction, and some certainly were lost from a defect in their design. All spend a part of their time, possibly a third, in the dockyards being patiently overhauled. But if the fact were definitely known that the submarines failed from defective construction, the Germans would soon find the cause of the defect and discover a remedy.

Again, it has already been pointed out that the submarines, to achieve success, had to act on certain lanes. If it were known that a submarine were sunk, another would be sent to take its place; otherwise the lane on which it had been stationed would be safe for some little time, and would be known to be safe. It would therefore be available for shipping. The British navy certainly achieved a good measure of success in dealing with the raiders, though, as Sir Edward Carson pointed out, they were unable to discover an infallible specific, and it was improbable, he said, such a reply would be found. But he thought the problem would be dealt with.

Sir Edward Carson inaugurated a new system of announcements. During the first three weeks of February the newspapers had been allowed to announce daily *all* the losses reported—Allied, British, neutral. They did not, in fact, announce more than 75 per cent. of the losses announced by Sir Edward, owing probably to the fact that there are always belated reports; and these would not appeal to newspapers, which wish only for early news. The figures given, however, showed clearly the course of the campaign. On some days the submarines would gain a great haul. One or two huge liners would swell the tonnage to a figure which, if it had been maintained, would speedily have produced a crisis. But other days one or two ships, and these not large, would be the total yield. Sir Edward, after declaring that he was an enemy to suppression, stated that in future only British losses would be announced by the Admiralty. The Allies could make separate announcements, and the neutrals must be responsible for reporting their own losses. Further, the tonnage would not be announced, since this would give valuable information to the enemy. It was a pity that the Admiralty resorted to this system, since it had the clear effect of misrepresenting the state of things. Thus in the fourth week of the new system the following report was issued. There were of all nationalities 2,528 vessels (excluding fishing and local craft) over 100 tons which arrived at ports of the United Kingdom, and 2,554 clearances. The losses of British vessels over 1,600 tons gross amounted to 16, and under 1,600 tons gross to 8. There were, besides, 21 fishing vessels sunk, 17 being sailing vessels. During the same period there were 18 vessels unsuccessfully attacked.

Now this does not seem to be a great casualty list. The total losses were only 45, including fishing vessels, and only 24 were of any size. But as a matter of fact the *tonnage* lost came to about 60,000, and there were nearly 190,000 tons of other shipping sunk. At such a rate the Allies would be losing the services of not far short of 1,000,000 tons a month. This was the figure which the Germans said they would attain and maintain, and for one week at least they came near their average. But no one could have gathered so much from the Admiralty announcement. Indeed, the case must have seemed to most people to be far otherwise. Under the appearance of frankness, the Admiralty were in reality throwing dust in the eyes of the people.



The week mentioned was one of the worst for the Allies. Let us glance at the figures for the preceding weeks. In the four weeks ending 18th March the arrivals and clearances of vessels in the United Kingdom were 4,541, 5,006, 3,944, and 5,082 respectively. These figures vary considerably; but inasmuch as the last was the highest, there was no falling off. The number of British vessels lost (exclusive of fishing vessels) was 22, 24, 15, 24—a series which again shows a considerable variation, but none which is much out of proportion to the number of vessels passing through the danger zone. The number of fishing craft sunk was 5, 2, 3, 21—this last week showing a marked and disproportionate rise. The unsuccessful attacks amounted to 16, 14, 11, and 18—the last figure again representing a disproportionate rise. Consider the figures in another way. In the last two weeks of the series the number of British vessels (of all sizes and sorts) attacked, successfully or unsuccessfully, amounted to 29 and 63 respectively. The difference in vessels risked was only about 25 per cent., whereas the attacks were more than double.

This shows probably the arrival of a new shift. The submarines worked in shifts. Part of their time they spent in being overhauled, while the crews rested and recruited; part of their time on their journey, and part of their time on their patrol. The new shift would start at full strength, and have the greatest chance of doing damage. As the days passed, they would come under risk themselves, be evaded or attacked and sunk. Hence the losses would follow a downward curve.

The surface engines of the submarines were of the Diesel type, consuming heavy oil with noxious fumes: and the submerged motive power was electric. Some of the survivors were found to have no nails on their hands, the acid having eaten them away. And the men could not all stand a life in so foul an atmosphere. They were no heroes, for it was a duty with little terror in it to shell defenceless ships or stalk defended ones under the water. The risks were small, ignobly small, though that is what the Germans would regard as real military skill—to make the risks small or nothing at all.

Yet as the campaign dragged on and added horror to horror, neutrals kept very much to their own harbours, and left the Allies to shift for themselves. The privations of the Germans began to seem less improbable to the British, and the war seemed to take on the character of a race. Who could survive the longer? For it might be that he who could last an extra hour would gain victory, for which all had sacrificed so much. Yet dangerous and irksome though it was, the main purpose of the campaign was admitted to be beyond achievement. From the military point of view, it was a blow at the Allies' communications. If the Channel crossing could only have been held for a week or two, the position of the Allies would have been serious. A vast volume of traffic had to flow across the Channel almost continuously to keep the armies in being. The war swallowed an immense volume of munitions. Even food for the two million or so men in the British army in France required a great amount of shipping. And hence it is interesting to find that the Germans themselves admitted that the Channel crossing was safe. In fact, it is true that any one path of so short extent could be made quite safe. And although the Germans sunk a hospital ship in the Channel, they were unable to cut the vital communications.

But it is none the less true that if the unrestricted campaign had persisted for twelve months with the success it achieved in the first three months, the question of a negotiated peace would have entered the foreground of practical politics.

## XIX. THE GREAT RETREAT.

AT some point\* in the Battle of the Somme the Germans recognised the trend of events, and prepared for a campaign of a different character. They appreciated the fact that the tactics of the Somme, if applied with the same precision and strategic insight, would be able to force any line of any strength. The limits to this process were much better realised by them than by the British. Current opinion in the United Kingdom, at any rate among civilians, tended to look for a clear breach of the line and a rolling up of the exposed edges on each side. As we have seen, there were certain points in the Battle of the Somme when this was certainly a possibility. But the fall of bad weather robbed the British Command of the opportunity of putting their fortunes to the test. The new year opened in a completely different atmosphere. The Germans saw clearly enough that, given an adequate supply of reserves, there was a danger that the line might be broken. The conditions of achieving such a success were that the positions which were to be forced should receive an overwhelming bombardment, and that there should be a constant stream of reinforcements. In order that too much risk should not be taken, Germany saw that she must not only evade the precise and prolific bombardment, but must discover some means of putting a term to the British effort altogether. In the Battle of the Somme there had been a falling off in the *moral* of the German soldiers, and it was desirable that the Kaiser's troops should be protected from another similar strain.

Ludendorff therefore decided upon the unrestricted submarine campaign and the first great retreat. The submarine campaign was to starve England out, and thereby force her to end the war before she had a chance of gaining a decision. High hopes were built upon this campaign. The German press was full of evidence on this point; but we need go no further than the obvious fact that Germany risked a breach with the United States. For clearly no nation which had not completely lost touch with reality could have looked calmly upon the possibility of encountering the full might of America. And it is evident that Germany intended the war to end before America took the field. The German Staff therefore hoped that the submarine campaign would reduce England to something approaching starvation in the spring or summer of 1917.

But it was also clear that the new Allied campaign would be timed to open at the earliest possible moment.† The submarine campaign began on 1st February. The decision as to this date was arrived at by a careful balancing of two different factors. Germany naturally wished to eke out as long as possible the season of her immunity from great attacks, but at the same time she wished to begin the attrition of the British power as early as possible. She had, moreover, to provide a sufficient number of submarines to begin the campaign with resounding successes, and to keep it going at a high pitch until her end was achieved. Yet she had no illusions about the reaction of the Allies. They would strike as soon as they could, with as much force as they possessed, and would keep on striking as long as they had the means. The German Staff, committed now to the defensive, had to find a means of evading the

\* We now know that it was "early in September." [Ludendorff, *My Memories*, p. 308.]

† Joffre had, in fact, planned that it should begin on 1st February, and the 1917 campaign would have run a very different course if this date had been adhered to, since the Germans would have been attacked before their retreat. It was Nivelle who changed the date.



operation of the Allies' military machine. Hence Hindenburg determined to retreat on a large scale over the whole of the Somme area. By so doing he would of course admit the victorious issue of the Battle of the Somme. But he would suffer only in the moral and political sphere, for he hoped to avoid the operation of the Allied plans.

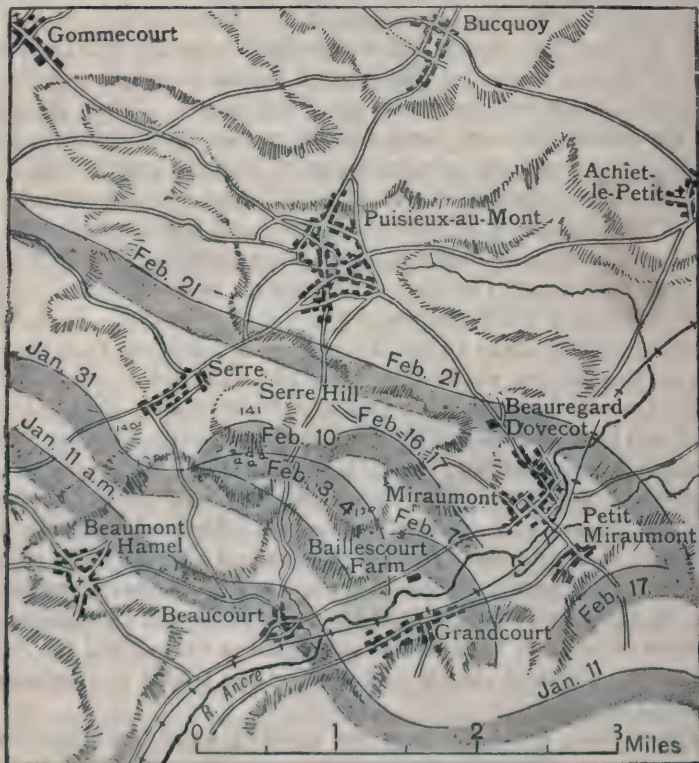
A glance at the map will show the special problem he had to face. The northern section of the Somme area lay about a vast salient which ran between Arras, Serre, and Bapaume. The British guns were ranged round this salient in a rough semi-circle. The Germans who defended it lay in a pocket of the British line open to a fire from almost every direction except the east. Such a salient could only be held at a great expense in human life. Any position could be taken with comparative ease, and with but little loss to the assailants. Even with the winter strengthening of the line on every side, it was still comparatively improvised between Serre and Péronne. This convex section of the front if driven in might give an opening to the assailants to inflict a decisive defeat upon the enemy. It was, therefore, decided to evacuate the salient between Arras and Bapaume; and since that would leave a great salient to the south, the retreat was to be made to what is called the Hindenburg Line. However surprising the retreat may appear to the outside observer, it is clear that it was the result of a careful plan; and there is complete evidence of the familiar German detailed organisation with regard to it. It is possible that Hindenburg hoped to renew the war of movements when he found that the Allies had forged an instrument for dealing with the war of positions. In passing, we may notice this strange compliment to the Allies—the recognition that they had solved the problem on the Somme which the Germans had failed to solve at Verdun. If he retreated, he would leave in his immediate foreground a stretch of territory so badly mauled and torn and broken by the Allies' bombardment that they could only advance through it with difficulty. All the ranges would be known to the Germans who evacuated the positions. Their guns would be in position; they would be retiring to firmer ground with communications all intact, whereas the troops which followed would be marching away from their guns and supplies on to ground so badly broken that it would hardly be possible for them to preserve perfect order. If the Germans had not repeatedly staked their reputation on the occupation of territory, the retreat must have been almost pure gain to them; and the Staff no doubt reckoned on securing a good chance of falling on the troops as they marched across this perilous belt of ground.

These expectations, however, were not realised, since the Allies followed with such caution and care, and struck so quickly and with such force at other parts of the front, that Hindenburg had neither the opportunity nor the troops to conduct a counter-offensive. This is the more wonderful that the Russian Revolution assured the Germans a virtual armistice on the Eastern front, and left them to move their troops very much as they would.

The actual events of the new year were interesting in themselves, and in any other war would have deserved to rank as considerable battles; but they were dwarfed into insignificance by the vast retreat and the offensives which followed it. The end of the year had seen the extension of the British front to about Roye. It measured about 120 miles—not a very great extent considering the total length of the line, but sufficiently great for an army which was to bear the bulk of the offensive. Rawlinson's 4th Army held the new section of the line up to his old right flank.

Gough's 5th Army extended to the western face of the Bapaume salient; Allenby's 3rd Army lay beyond. The 1st Army with Horne, who had commanded the 15th Corps throughout the same battle, lay about Armentières, and Plumer's 2nd Army occupied the Ypres area. The gaps caused by the Somme battle had been filled up, and the armies were fresh and eager.

In the salient south of Arras the early operations of the new year were designed to bite into the improvised front between Serre and Sailly. The radius of the salient was about six and a half miles, and every advantage lay on the side of the assailants while the defenders chose to maintain so difficult a position. The battle was reopened in January by Fanshawe's 5th Corps (the left of Gough's three corps) north of



The Advance astride the Ancre.

the Ancre. Small advances were made, and 1,228 prisoners were taken. In the engagements of February, the first objective was the little village of Grandcourt, which lies south of the Ancre. On this part of the salient lay Jacob's 2nd Corps, comprising the 63rd, 18th, and 2nd Divisions. The British crept along the north of the river eastward from Beaucourt, and their advance rendered Grandcourt insecure. An attempt to regain the lost positions was made with great promptitude and violence. Four counter-attacks were delivered; but when these had been crushed the British went forward, and on the 7th of the month entered the abandoned village. This was the first occasion upon which the Germans voluntarily abandoned a strong position to the British. It does not seem to have won the attention it



deserved. Viewing the action at the moment, it certainly suggested a new prudence on the part of the German Staff. The remainder of the month was followed by tactical advances which made the position of the Germans more and more desperate. The movement up the Beaucourt valley was extended, and the positions of Serre and Miraumont were steadily undermined. Serre lies on the western spur of a chalk ridge which runs south-east and loses itself in the Ancre valley below Miraumont. On the 10th a night attack upon the southern foot of Serre Hill was made on a front of some three-quarters of a mile, when 215 prisoners were taken. The new positions which tended to create a small local salient about Serre were counter-attacked repeatedly, but without success. Then on the 17th the direction of the attack was changed, and an advance was made towards Miraumont, near which place concealed German guns had caused the assailants heavy loss in their assaults towards Serre. The attack was again timed for the night, and in the pitch dark the troops advanced through a heavy fog against the isolated hill which covers Miraumont from the south. The ground was soft and heavy from the recent rains, and the German guns had all the chief points carefully ranged. Aeroplanes flew at a low elevation to assist the men, and the hill was passed; but the troops came later under a heavy barrage from the guns. The attack, which had done so well at the outset, faded away. It had carried the line to within a few hundred yards of Petit Miraumont, south of the Ancre; but only the southern slopes of the outlying hill of Miraumont could be retained. Yet the ground won was of such importance that a heavy counter-attack was delivered almost immediately. The British had taken 773 prisoners, of the 75th, 395th, and 65th Prussian regiments, in the advance. But the counter-attack failed, and without causing any casualties. The results were not long in making themselves appreciated. Petit Miraumont was captured on the 24th, and Miraumont and Serre were both in narrow pockets of the British lines, with the British guns searching the approaches to them.

The German retreat followed. Serre, which was one of the most amazing fortress positions in the enemy lines, was entered on the 25th. The following day Warlencourt, Eaucourt, Pys, and Miraumont were occupied, and the retreat had spread over a front of twelve miles from Gommecourt to Gueudecourt, due south of Bapaume. Le Barque and Ligny were occupied, and Gommecourt—another of the amazingly strong positions which had resisted the British attack in the opening of the Battle of the Somme—was taken by a night assault. Gommecourt was exposed when Serre was entered, and with it the Germans had abandoned a belt of land some twelve miles long by three miles deep. The significance of this retreat we have already touched upon; but we must view it also as it was viewed by those who lived in those wearying days of the war. In the light of their partial knowledge the retreat was a great victory for the Allies. The German press indeed gave them every reason so to regard it. Five days before it began with the entry into Serre, the *North German Gazette* was informing the world that the British tactics had proved unsuccessful. "Even neutrals say that the English tactics of the last few weeks have not had the slightest effect on the situation here (the Ancre)." And they had boasted times without number of their "steel wall," of "biting on granite," of the invincibility of their lines. The *North German Gazette*, a semi-official paper, may have meant to throw dust in the eyes of the British at the same time that it prepared the public for the theory which was shortly to be advanced that the retreat was part of Hindenburg's supreme strategy, and was carried out under no compulsion.

The retreat was a well-organised and brilliantly achieved operation. The actual evacuation was completed "during the second half of February," and, as the Germans boasted, was carried out unobserved. There is no question whatever about this fact, although at the time there was a tendency in Great Britain to fail to appreciate the retreat at its just value. History will clearly judge that this was a cooler and more skilful piece of tactics than the holding to positions at frightful cost in the Somme area. The retreat was carried out under no immediate compulsion. That it was unobserved is due to a variety of causes. In positional warfare, where the opponents rarely saw each other and the struggle was driven underground, it was not a difficult thing to withdraw the troops on either side during the nightly reliefs. The weather was not good, and the aerial reconnaissance had no fair chance of doing its duty. And yet we cannot but reflect that such honours as there were in the operation went to the Germans. It seems an odd thing that in an area subjected to constant pressure it should not have been discovered that the enemy was weakening his numbers and fading away into the distance. The battered defences over the evacuated area were completely denuded of all material. The resistance encountered in the British advance was made by small bodies of picked men with machine guns or by solitary snipers. And yet no prisoners were claimed. The *Nation*, which alone drew attention to the masterly manner in which the retreat had been carried out, and the influence it must have on the Allied plans,\* came in for a good share of obloquy. But it was merely applying the same military principles which had led critics to discount the German successes before Warsaw in 1915. The article was taken by the censor as an excuse for prohibiting the foreign circulation of the *Nation*; but in actual fact it was only a colourable pretext, the real reason being the alleged pacifist principles of that periodical. For in the same article I had stated that the retreat was the belated dividend of the Somme battle. And clearly a retreat, as a retreat, is irrelevant, and depends for its interpretation upon preceding or subsequent events. Hindenburg's victory at Tannenberg was won by withdrawing his centre and enveloping the Russian flanks.

In the second week of March three and a half miles along the crest immediately west of Bapaume was abandoned; and the British advanced patrols went farther and occupied the village of Grevillers and Loupart Wood. This was a very important success. The end of February had left the German line partly on the chalky downs which form this ridge and partly in advance of them. These downs were the main defence not only of Bapaume, but also of the whole of the salient north and west of it. The ridge did not rise much above the general level of the district, though it sufficed to hide the German guns and give observation of the immediate foreground. The British had devoted themselves to the capture of the ridge, and at the time many students held that the Germans designed to stand there for a considerable time. This was not the case. No doubt they intended to hold it as long as they could; but some time before the methodic preparation for a greater retreat had been in train. With the fall of Grevillers, a village less than a mile and a half west of Bapaume, it became clear that a considerable readjustment of the German line must be undertaken. This was made the more certain by the British success earlier in the month against Bouchavesnes, when 173 prisoners and

\* It has only recently been made known that Sir Douglas Haig and a number of the most distinguished French generals shared this opinion. And, in view of the revelations of the Nivelle controversy, there can no longer be any question that my point of view was perfectly just.



several machine guns were taken by the left flank of Rawlinson's army. The tenure of Péronne now became precarious.

After the fall of Grevillers there were advances eastward from Sailly, about which place some of the fiercest engagements of the Somme battle had centred. A careful watch had been maintained over the German lines to discover the first signs of a greater withdrawal. The French had been testing the lines as far east as Reims, and on the 16th they began to advance on both sides of the Aisne. The Germans had been observed preparing another line of defence far in the rear of the battle-front; and under the concentrated pressure of the French the whole of the outer line began to give way. Field-Marshal Haig accordingly ordered a general advance on the whole front south of Arras for 17th March. By the evening of that day Bapaume, Barleux, La Maisonnette, Achiet-le-Grand, had been occupied by the British, and the French had advanced two and a half miles on a front of twelve and a half miles. A feeling of spring was in the air. The season had turned, and it seemed at length as if the sun of victory would shine on the Allied troops. The catalogue of occupied villages now became too large to detail. On the 18th, Péronne, Chaulnes, and Noyon had been penetrated; and Nesle was occupied by British and French cavalry. The retreat was now extended to a front of eighty-two miles, and Uhlans made their appearance to cover the German rearguards. On the 19th Ham was occupied by the French. On the 20th the British were only ten miles from St. Quentin, and the French were across the St. Quentin Canal, had taken the important junction of Tergnier, and had chased the Uhlans into Rouppe, which is but five miles from St. Quentin.

In their advance the Allies everywhere found traces of that vandalism which is now associated with the German army. Many towns and villages were literally represented by heaps of ruins with scarcely a wall higher than a man's waist. Much of the damage was of course justifiable military damage. Roads had been blown to fragments; cross-roads were huge craters; not a bridge was left standing; and the difficulty of crossing this ground was ample justification of the German devastation. But besides this ruthless damage there were traces everywhere of a spirit that is hard to reconcile with the most debased form of civilised warfare. What must have been the thoughts of the advancing armies as they entered ruined villages, sacked with a completeness that it is hard to describe, defiled in ways which are certainly beyond record, and peopled by a handful of old women, tottering men, and small children. The bulk of the population which could be of any use to the Germans had been removed. In the track of the retreating Germans were smoking villages, wells which were poisoned or defiled by dung, fruit trees torn up by the roots, looted banks, churches burned out, stores cleared as though by a swarm of locusts. The felling of trees was excusable from the cover they might give, but young fruit trees have never before been torn up in this way. The Germans seemed determined that if they must retreat and abandon French territory to its rightful owners, they would give it back in such a condition that no Frenchman could take pride in the fact.

By 21st March the resistance had stiffened about St. Quentin and Arras, and the limits of the retreat became clearer. On the 23rd the French had approached so near La Fère that the Germans flooded the town and neighbourhood to defend themselves against the irresistible advance. The French pushed their troops up the river Oise, which flows between St. Quentin and La Fère. The British were

methodically pressing in towards Cambrai. At Baumetz-lez-Cambrai several fierce engagements were fought, and the town changed hands several times before it finally rested in the hands of the Australians. Far away to the south the French were fighting through the lower forest of Coucy, which formed the southern bastion of the La Fère defence. Coucy le Château was taken by them in a night attack on the 26th; but the beautiful château, a unique architectural feature, had been destroyed. The French improved their positions in this direction consistently, and by the 27th the whole of lower Coucy forest was in their hands. The Allies had made wonderful progress in spite of the extraordinarily broken nature of the ground, which was so much worse in front of the British. At Villers Faucon a squadron of British cavalry fought a brisk engagement, and with the help of the guns captured the village. The troops of Snow's 7th corps were meanwhile moving in upon Croisilles and advancing south of the Bapaume-Cambrai road. On the last day of March the British had reached a point within four miles of St. Quentin. At this part of the line the British had won positions close to the Siegfried (or, as the British called it, the Hindenburg) Line; but from Selency, about four miles north-west of St. Quentin, the British front stretched through Jeancourt, Epéhy, and Doignies—away from the line. They had not been able to force the Germans to abandon the positions they held in advance of the Hindenburg Line. From Doignies the front began once more to approach the Hindenburg Line which ran from near Arras to Queant.

These positions had been won by a kind of fighting that was new to the Western front, and partook more of the nature of the open fighting at the beginning of the war. On 1st April the 96th and 97th Brigades captured Savy Wood, four miles west of St. Quentin, and the French made progress up the Soissons-Laon road. The following day a brisk action was fought about Lagnicourt, where the British took 275 prisoners and some machine guns. Croisilles, Doignies, and Ecoust were taken. The French on the 3rd tested the southern defences of St. Quentin by an attack on an eight-mile front. They captured Dallon, and pressed into the suburbs of St. Quentin. The attack had been carefully prepared by a heavy bombardment, and was successful in the capture of ground and the infliction of heavy losses on the enemy. They also bit more deeply into the salient about Laon.

The position was little changed on 9th April. The British, in spite of the handicap of fighting over ground that had been scientifically broken, had pressed into the pivot of the Hindenburg Line about Arras and near St. Quentin. On some parts of the front the Allies had advanced about twenty-five miles. The difficulties of the pursuit were well described by Sir Douglas Haig: "We were advancing over a country in which all means of communication had been destroyed against an enemy whose armies were still intact and capable of launching a vigorous offensive should a favourable opening present itself. Strong detachments of his infantry and cavalry occupied points of advantage along our line of advance, striving to keep the enemy informed of our progress and to screen his movements. His guns, which had already been withdrawn to previously prepared positions, were available at any moment to cover and support a sudden counterstroke, while the conditions of the country across which we were moving made the progress of our own artillery unavoidably slow. The bulk of the enemy forces were known to be holding a very formidable defensive system, upon which he could fall back should his counterstroke miss its aim. On the other hand, our troops as they moved forward left all



prepared defences farther and farther behind them. In such circumstances the necessity for caution was obvious. . . . The courage and endurance of our troops has carried them triumphantly through a period of fighting of a particularly trying nature, in which they have been subjected to the maximum of personal hardship and physical strain. I cannot speak too highly of the qualities displayed by all ranks. . . .

"Although the deliberate nature of the enemy's withdrawal enabled him to choose his own ground for resistance, and to employ every device to inflict losses on our troops, our casualties, which had been exceedingly moderate throughout the operations on the Ancre, during the period of the retreat became exceptionally light."

This is perhaps sufficient to say about one of the most surprising operations in the war, though it is not usual to make so much about following up a retreating enemy. Hindenburg hoped by his manœuvre to forestall the Allied offensive. The German newspapers at the time were full of veiled suggestions of a blow during the retreat. Part of this press work was no doubt meant to encourage the Germans and distract their attention from the retreat ; for when all is said, a retreat is a confession of inferiority of men, material, or *position*. It must be justified by its results. There can be no doubt that it did save the Germans heavy losses and a probable breach in their line, and it was long before the Allies again came so near a decisive victory. It disarranged the Allied plans with a completeness which only the battles of this bloody year made evident. With part of the French army near open mutiny, and the British armies bleeding to death in fruitless attacks to give their Allies a breathing space, Ludendorff may well have congratulated himself on the effects of his retreat.

## BOOK V.

### THE ALLIES' THIRD OFFENSIVE (April–October 1917).

"THE year 1917," said Marshal Foch, in an interview with Mr. G. Ward Price, "was a year lost by both sides ;" but it was more favourable to the enemy than to the Allies. During that part of the year which is covered by the phase we are at present considering, though the purely military exchanges showed a balance in favour of the Allies, the resistance of Russia finally broke down, and the enemy were able to transfer guns and troops to the Western and Southern fronts.

The Allies' second offensive was, therefore, still-born. They had long seen that their chance lay in attacking simultaneously on all the fronts, and at the inter-Allied conference of Chantilly, 15th–16th November, plans were concerted for a simultaneous offensive on all fronts. Joffre's plans were ready on 27th November. The northern armies were to attack between the Somme and Lassigny, while the British army attacked between Bapaume and Vimy. The offensive was to begin on 1st February. A fortnight later an attack was to be delivered north of the Aisne, to complete the disruption of the defences upon which the Aisne front rested, already threatened in flank by the main offensive. An army order of 10th December counselled more aggressive tactics, and these seemed to be justified completely when Nivelle struck again at Verdun on the 15th. Immediately after, on Joffre's advice, Nivelle was invested with the supreme command of the armies of the north and north-east. Nivelle at once gave the plans a more ambitious and, it must be added, a more hazardous turn. The front of attack was to be extended to Reims, and instead of depending upon the flank movement about Lassigny to manœuvre the Germans off the Aisne positions, he intended to rupture them completely within twenty-four hours.

The date was postponed two months, and at the Calais Conference of 26th February Field-Marshal Haig was placed under General Nivelle for the duration of these operations. When, on the following day, Haig received Nivelle's *directive*, he very properly pointed out that it took no account of the German withdrawal. He was to strike in the air while the Germans would strike on his northern flank. Haig's observations were sent to Nivelle, who accused him of "repeatedly" attempting to slip away from instructions. But at the very same moment Franchet d'Esperey was making similar suggestions. Him Nivelle informed that he saw no reason to change his plans, and the German retreat would not extend to Franchet d'Esperey's front. The Russian Revolution also made no difference to his plans, he said. Nivelle had friction with other subordinates. Pétain would not accept the command of the offensive and the 1,200,000 men of the G.A.R. (*groupe des armées de rupture*). Micheler, who accepted later, expressed his profound misgivings, as did



Pétain. Mangin alone seemed content with the theory of the attack. Under Painlevé, the new Minister of War, a council of war was held at Compiègne on 6th April. The British were not represented, although they were to open the attack and suffer most from Nivelle's mistakes. The discussion was stormy, and so great was the opposition to Nivelle that he resigned. The resignation was not accepted, and some sort of harmony was secured. But, according to M. Painlevé, at that time Nivelle knew that the plan of attack on two-thirds of the front of the 5th Army had been discovered by the enemy. In such circumstances the 1917 campaign began.

The seven months of this phase saw heavy fighting on the main fronts. On the Western front the brunt of the task fell upon the British, and the spring and summer were filled by an almost continuous offensive, in which very heavy losses were incurred without strategic result. The battles of this period were in effect, though not in purpose, battles for ridges, for observation. At Vimy, above the Aisne, at Messines, and at Ypres the profit was simply the gain of the ridges. The purpose underlying these various attacks was more ambitious. The most costly and least effective was General Nivelle's Aisne attack, which produced a mutiny in the French army that required all Pétain's generalship to counteract and all Haig's fidelity to cover.

But these months were not ineffective. Though they brought heavy loss to the Allies, they inflicted heavy loss, too, upon the enemy. They saw the last of the Colonial campaigns carried through to the penultimate stage, the extension of British power in Mesopotamia, the improvement of positions on every front except the East. But when we remember the golden deeds of heroism which went to secure such meagre results, we are justified in writing down this phase as inglorious for the Allies. The growing outcry for unity of command but marked *the need of one great general*. The French had discovered such a figure, but with a traditional facility for misusing their advantages, they had placed him in a consultative instead of an executive position.

So, to the growing weariness of the world, the war dragged on through seas of blood.

## I. THE BATTLE OF ARRAS: THE FIRST PHASE.

THE chief aim of the German retreat to the Siegfried Line was to avoid the Allied offensive, and to meet it when joined on better terms. That it was carried out with such success is due to Ludendorff's wise choice of the area over which he retreated, his withdrawal in the centre while maintaining his hold on two strong pivots. One of these was the heights above the Aisne, which are finished off towards the west in the great bastion about Laon and La Fère. The other was the ground about Arras, and especially the ridge on which Vimy was perched. The Aisne heights and the Vimy Ridge had each been the scene of much severe fighting, and Ludendorff assumed that they were sufficiently safe to withstand any probable attack. By his withdrawal over so great an area he effected a considerable economy in his troops at a time when men were of the utmost importance to him. From Arras to the Aisne he had taken his stand upon the chord of the rough arc which the old line made, and he had probably been able to withdraw to the reserve the effectives of an army by the shortening of his line. The Siegfried Line ran from

Tilloy-lès-Mofflaines, south of Arras, past Bullecourt, below Queant, and thence eastward; and at the end of the first week in April the British were coming into serious contact with the upper ends of the line, where it joined on to the old defensive system about Arras. In the first week in April a battle had been fought on the front between Doignies, just below the Bapaume-Cambrai road, and Henin, on the stream Cojeul.

It was from the neighbourhood of this stream, as far north as Givenchy-en-Gohelle, that Sir Douglas Haig had determined to challenge Ludendorff's new positions. Before the German retreat he had planned to strike below Arras with Allenby's army, while Gough struck up from the Ancre area. The combined attack against the north and south boundaries of the salient would have imperilled the German retreat. The Germans escaped that peril, and by the increase of their reserves through shortening their front, were able to sustain the Allies' attacks after the troops had occupied the Siegfried Line. But they could not wholly escape the Allies' offensive, since it required very little readjustment in this part of the front to carry out part of the original plan. The Vimy Ridge was one of the objectives, and as the front had not changed in that sector, the old preparations were not disturbed. This low chalky down, with its gentle slope towards the west and abrupt fall of some 200 feet towards the east, offered observation positions which, to retain the initiative, the British must hold.

The Allied Council of War at the French General Headquarters had approved \* Sir Douglas Haig's plan to regard the Battle of Arras as an offensive with limited objectives, which achieved he should transfer his concentration to Flanders with the object of compelling the Germans to withdraw from the Belgian coast. In the battle these objectives were gained in six days; but, in effect, the battle had to fill a more important rôle in the general offensive. It had to involve the German reserves while the Battle of the Aisne was being prepared, to be pushed if this should lead to decisive developments, and, if not, still to be pushed to enable Nivelle to round off his attack and disengage. It was this unsatisfactory lien on the British plans which made the later stages of the Arras battle very costly and unproductive. And Nivelle's plans had hardly a chance of achieving their end from the first.

The importance of the Vimy Ridge is evident. No advance towards Douai could be made while this bastion remained unreduced; and while it remained in German hands it afforded a strong manœuvring point. Sir Douglas Haig appreciated the importance of the position, and he was not alone in this. Four different attacks it had resisted; and although General D'Urbal's army secured a footing upon it in September 1915, it was so precarious that when the ground was taken over by the British in the early part of 1916 it was lost. And the Germans needed no further warning to multiply and elaborate their defences. But when the ridge became of the first importance as a pivot, they not only paid additional attention to it, but prepared a switch line in the rear to provide against an unexpected success. It is in this way that the Germans make war. They hope for the best, and take every means to compass it; but they prepare for all eventualities, even when these seem the most remote from probability.

The battle for Vimy Ridge, the greatest separate engagement in the war up to

\* Under the impression, no doubt, that, if Nivelle's prediction were to be verified, the whole German front would be ruptured, and Haig would no longer wish to use his armies otherwise than in pursuit.



that time, began just three weeks after the beginning of the Great Retreat. The roads were almost impassable to artillery on the evacuated ground. The Germans had seen to that ; but it does not seem to have occurred to them that the Allies



General Map of the Lens-Arras Front and the Country towards Douai.

would not attempt to challenge so grave a handicap, but would concentrate where they could. North of Arras as far as Lens the communications were intact. South of Arras to the Cojeul they were less distributed than anywhere in the evacuated area, and hence between these points an artillery concentration could be made

under the best conditions. It was an inevitable position. No general would choose to retreat with his flanks in the air; but if the flanks were to rest on a ground that was undisturbed, the Allies could attack them with as much ease as any other stationary sector of the war of positions. The Germans critically disturbed the Allied plans, but could not wholly evade attack.

And yet, of the many positions upon the Western front, few offered less encouragement to the assault. The Germans had elaborated the fortifications on this ridge until there was some excuse for regarding it as impregnable. Nothing could happen on the west (or east) of it without being seen from the observation positions on the ridge. Unless concentrations took place at night and were most skilfully hidden by day, the Germans must know all that was afoot. Three divisions of Haldane's 6th Corps, the 15th (Highland), 37th, and 12th, were accommodated in Arras itself. The deep cellars and sewers were connected up by great tunnels, and here, in underground warrens, lighted by electricity, the troops for the attack east of the city were hidden. Yet though the Germans must have known that an assault was preparing, they failed to grasp its dimensions or its imminence. The British armies saw to it that they should have no other advantages over and above the possession of the observation posts on the ridge. The airmen flew over the enemy lines continually, taking numerous photographs, and bombing railway centres, trains, ammunition dumps, aerodromes, balloons, and even infantry detachments.

Just before the battle 1,700 photographs were brought back by British airmen, despite many and frequent battles in the air. The battle began on 9th April. For a few days there had been fine weather on the front, but when the infantry went forward in the darkness of Easter Monday morning the weather had broken, and it was showery. It was also dull and misty, so that when the light came the airmen could give but little help. The wind grew higher as the morning advanced, and snow began to fall. The weather was, in fact, almost as unfavourable as it could be. A heavy bombardment preceded the attack. It had been in progress three weeks, and the British artillery was now at its maximum. All day long on Easter Sunday it continued, and it did not cease during the night. At about four o'clock the whistles blew, the range lengthened, and, covered by a skilful barrage, the infantry attack began. The bombardment at the end had been extraordinary. Ordinary words fail to give any description of it, and if we say that nearly 2,000 tons of shell fell on each mile of the front during the first day, we are no nearer a just realisation of the conditions. The boom, boom, boom of the heavy guns, the whistling and screaming of the shells, the rattle and drumming of the field guns, rent the air. The darkness was cut into ribbons and funnels of light, and the whole of the sky lay like a lake shot with the brilliant splashes of colour from star shells and rockets of every colour calling to the German guns for their help.

The front of the attack measured some fifteen miles from below Givenchy-en-Gohelle (a name which had some odd and obvious perversions in the mouths of the British soldiers) to just north of Croisilles. General Allenby (3rd Army) and General Horne (1st Army) were in charge of the attack. Allenby's three corps, the 7th (Snow), 6th (Haldane), and 17th (Ferguson), each with four divisions, were all engaged between Croisilles and Thelus. General Horne, who had been in command of the 15th Corps in the Battle of the Somme, and had since been placed in charge of the 1st Army, had only one corps, the Canadian (Byng), engaged; but for this was



reserved the Vimy Ridge. The troops engaged included two famous Scots divisions, the 15th and 51st; and General Lukin had brought his South Africans from Egypt to the 9th Division, which he now commanded. The Germans had six divisions in the line, the 11th (Prussian), 14th (Bavarian), 1st (Bavarian Reserve), the 17th, 18th, and 79th (Reserve) of General von Falkenhausen's 6th Army, whose left lay, like Allenby's right, about the Sensée River. The German defensive system included three main positions, each of three or four parallel lines, with traverses and switches, and masses of wire. There was a space of about 500 yards between the first two "lines," and about 3,000 yards between the second and third. The whole system was from three to five miles deep. Yet before noon the first and second lines had been captured, and by nightfall there was a big gap in the third.

When the Canadians went forward, the elaborate fortifications of the ridge as a whole were no more. Small islands in the defensive system had survived the bombardment, and these gave trouble to the storming troops; but by the early afternoon all the ridge, with the exception of the flattish platform (Hill 145) on the northern end, was in the hands of the Canadians. The barrage, so the Canadians said, seemed to be resting on the edge of the bayonets; but the mettle of troops who can follow thus closely was in itself one of the most important factors of the success. On the centre and right the advance was equally successful, and bombed down the trench lines in front of them, except on the extreme right, where the 21st and 30th Divisions made no headway until the 56th, farther north, turned south. There was a fierce hand-to-hand struggle at St. Laurent-Blangy, due east of Arras, where the ruined houses still afforded cover for machine guns; but Lukin's South African and Scots brigades captured it and swept past it, and took Athies. The 15th Division, famous from its achievement at Loos, conquered the railway triangle after a fierce resistance. Feuchy, below the Scarpe, was another centre of resistance, and caused the 12th Division, on the right of the 15th, heavy loss till some tanks ambled up and put an end to the struggle. "The Harp," a terrible little redoubt farther south, did not give the trouble expected from it. This touch of the unexpected, indeed, hung over much of the battle. The 3rd Division, with the assistance of two tanks, captured the position with practically a whole battalion of the 162nd German Regiment.

The Germans seem in some places to have lost their heads, for a brigadier-general and his staff were captured at Hyderabad Redoubt, north of Fampoux, by the 1st Rifle Brigade (4th Division), the brigadier weeping for shame. The German third line was breached here, and a transport unit galloped up from Douai into British hands. By 2 P.M. 5,816 prisoners had been counted. They were mostly Bavarians, hard fighters; but they surrendered with some facility. There was considerable material taken besides that which had been destroyed. At the end of the day the troops were established astride the Scarpe in the third line, and had captured several miles of the new Siegfried Line. Cavalry attached to Allenby's army had been moved east of Arras during the day, but only small bodies were employed to keep touch between the units north and south of the Scarpe. Uncut wire makes the use of cavalry impossible, and the main body was moved west of Arras during the evening.

Hill 145 and the small knoll which was descriptively called the "Pimple" caused the Canadians some trouble. Lying on their left, they were used as the pivot of the German counter-thrust. If Hill 145 could have been maintained, the

possession of Vimy Ridge would never have been secured, and the reduction of this stronghold was a matter of much heavy fighting and considerable British casualties. The Canadians captured the redoubt on Hill 145 during the night, but the Pimple was not taken until Thursday afternoon, after several days of bitter fighting. Concentrating in Bois-en-Hache and Swallow Wood, the Germans time after time assaulted the Canadian extreme left. The Bois-en-Hache lay north of the Pimple, and in order to take this knoll the wood must first be taken. An operation of considerable skill was the attack up the valley of the Souchez stream which led to the capture of the wood and to the storming of the Pimple. Snowstorms made the advance extremely difficult and hazardous, but the 24th Division (Holland's 1st Corps), with the 4th Canadian Division, got their blow home, and the ridge was completely cleared.

Snow fell heavily on Tuesday, but the troops were over the ridge and clearing its eastern slopes. Farbus, in the plain to the east, was captured. By this time the Canadian Corps alone had taken prisoner over 3,500 men and 70 officers. Fampoux, brilliantly captured by the 2nd West Ridings (4th Division) on Monday, outflanked the southern point, about which the German resistance was focused. Monchy-le-Preux stood on a small eminence less than 100 feet above the plain, but formidable because of its dominance over the prevailing flatness of the country. If it could have been retained, it would, like the Pimple on the north of Vimy Ridge, have offered a strong centre for counter-attacks which might have redressed the situation. Naturally at this stage of the war there was hardly a chance of its retention; but the capture of the fortress might have been a matter of the greatest difficulty. The loss of Fampoux weakened the position from the north; but every advantage had been taken of the position to make it impregnable. The woods that fringed the hillside were wired and defended by machine guns. The first attempt to capture the village failed; but on Wednesday the British troops had been rested, and the position was in their hands before the enemy realised the imminence of the danger. The 112th Brigade (37th Division) crept round the southern approaches of Monchy, and the Royal Horse Guards, Essex Yeomanry, and 10th Hussars rode round the northern flank, while the tanks approached the position frontally. The village and its garrison were captured, and the new front south of the Scarpe was assured. In this cavalry action the British sustained heavy losses, among the killed being the commander, Brigadier-General Bulkeley Johnson. Counter-attacks failed to recover the position, and the German artillery which took it in hand could do no more to cause its evacuation.

There comes a time in all offensives when the first impetus wears off, and unless fresh troops can be brought in the advance dies down and comes to rest. Even in the limited offensive there is a sort of rhythm, and the defensive after its first reverses tends to recover and stiffen its resistance. On Wednesday already, while Monchy was being captured, the Australians of the 5th Army suffered a sharp check at Bullecourt, in the Hindenburg Line, to which the attack had extended. The requirements of the defence on the main battle sector were tending to weaken the adjacent parts of the line, and Sir Douglas Haig struck at each of the flanking positions in turn. On the southern flank, as we have seen, the attack was checked; but on Sunday a heavy German counter-attack gave the Australians the chance for revenge. Four divisions, two of them Guards, were employed in this operation on the six-mile sector between Noreuil and Hermies. This sector is just south of



that upon which the British attack had been delivered. At Lagnicourt the Germans broke into the Australian lines, and even reached the advanced battery positions. But the troops then recovered, and fell upon the Prussian Guard with such fury that the Germans lost their heads, retired in disorder upon their own wire, and suffered terrible loss. Nearly 1,700 dead were found by the Australians, and 360 prisoners were taken.

Meanwhile the results of the second spurt on the north of the Vimy Ridge had declared themselves. The Germans began to withdraw on Friday morning, and before noon the Canadian patrols were in Givenchy-en-Gohelle, and had passed through Petit-Vimy. Later in the day the troops occupied Angres, Vimy, Willerval, and Bailleul. By Saturday evening they held Lievin,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Lens, and had captured guns, tools, tramway lines, and ammunition. The number of prisoners had risen to 13,000, with over 200 guns, many of them 8-inch and 5.9-inch howitzers, 130 field guns, and 250 machine guns. Wancourt, near the Cojeul, was a centre of hard fighting, and it is difficult to think of it having been taken but for the assistance of two tanks, which rode down the uncut wire and reduced the nests of machine guns.

The success had carried the troops over the Siegfried Line, and they now lay some distance in front of the switch line which guarded Douai. On Sunday further progress was made towards the city, and in the bright sunlight which now poured on the battlefield the troops could see into the streets. They looked like those of a deserted city; but as one watched there were sudden explosions, as though some natural force were at work. Not a figure showed in the streets, though if any attempt had been made to enter them the hidden machine guns would soon have been at work. The explosions went on spasmodically, flames broke out. The Germans were evidently making the city useless in case they had to abandon it. The guns were withdrawn. There was no manœuvring room either north or south. To the north the British line was held off by the positions on that Hill 70 across which the Highlanders had raced in the Battle of Loos.

Lens was not to be captured yet. Its position was similar to that of St. Quentin. It could have been taken, but to have done so it would have been necessary to risk heavy loss and to destroy most valuable mining property. It was a bitter dilemma. These Allied towns were at the mercy of the Allies, and could only be taken at the cost of the sacrifice of all that made them useful and memorable. The renunciation was not made while there was a chance of compelling their evacuation by other means, and their capture alone would have given no commensurate advantage. So such towns remained in German hands to form powerful centres in the defence.

The first phase of the Battle of Arras may be considered as ending at this point. It was the greatest British success up to that time on the Western front. It was in some ways the greatest Allied success. If we consider the importance of the positions secured, the number of prisoners and guns, and the number of casualties, it was undoubtedly the greatest Allied success since the war of positions began. It established the British on the only observation positions between Arras and Douai. The Germans had to hold their new positions with heavier numbers than before. More men had to be instantly available at need. The possibility of surprise was not ruled out any longer. The northern pivot of the Hindenburg withdrawal had gone. Ludendorff confesses his surprise and depression at the British success. For some days the German position was critical; but the impetus of the

attack was lost, and the Germans rallied. But the very successes of the battle made a pause for reorganisation necessary. The front had been rolled four miles farther east, and the old communications could not satisfactorily supply it. If Sir Douglas Haig had had only his own plans to think about, he would now have transferred his attention to Flanders.

But the French offensive was on the point of being launched, and "it was most important that the full pressure of the British offensive should be maintained in order to assist our Allies, and that we might be ready to seize any opportunity which might follow their success. Accordingly active preparations were undertaken to renew my attack." The following week saw little change, though already the battle had achieved its *rôle* in the Allied plans of drawing the German reserves from the front of the French attack. The German infantry had doubled on this front since the beginning of the battle, despite the casualties.

## II. THE BATTLE OF ARRAS: THE SECOND PHASE.

IN accordance with the arrangements made with General Nivelle, Sir Douglas Haig pressed forward his preparations for renewing the attack. His *rôle* was to wait upon the turn of events farther south, and meanwhile to exercise his maximum pressure so that men and guns should not be taken to the Aisne front where the French were attempting to achieve an indisputably decisive success. Bad weather and poor visibility interfered with the preparations, and all was ready on 21st April except the atmospheric conditions.

When the battle was renewed two days later, it was already clear that Nivelle's blow had miscarried; but it was necessary to give support all the more. It was decided to deliver a series of vigorous attacks at short intervals. The first was directed at the nine miles of front between Croisilles and Gavrelle, with a subsidiary and minor attack south-west of Lens. The assault was launched by nine divisions at 4.45 A.M., and achieved an immediate success. Over the whole front the first German positions were entered. The Highlanders and Lowlanders of the 44th and 45th Brigades (15th Division) encountered a deadly fire steadily and swept through Guémappe and to the north. The 29th Division, to the north, reached the western outskirts of Infantry Hill. The 51st Division carried the formidable Chemical Works, across the Arras-Douai railway line, and reached the western outskirts of Rœux; and on the north the 63rd Naval Division captured Gavrelle.

These successes had been achieved by 10 o'clock; but the troops had little breathing space before a vigorous counter-attack was delivered. Sweeping down the Cojeul valley on the south, the Germans pushed back the 50th and 30th Divisions, leaving the 33rd hanging on with their left exposed. The gallant 15th Division were driven from Guémappe, and the gains below the Scarpe were practically wiped out. But the Naval Division at Gavrelle stood firm and beat off five determined assaults. At 6 o'clock the advance was resumed, and the Scots of the 15th Division once more made an irresistible attack, which recaptured Guémappe and left it in their hands. On the south a company of 1st Middlesex and 2nd Argyll and Sutherlands still held their forward position all night, on a little peninsula in the German line. They had gone forward with the 30th Division, and they stood where they had reached



This is a detailed historical map of the Arras region in France, showing the Somme and Scarpe rivers, the Arras Canal, and the city of Arras. The map includes numerous towns and villages, a scale bar from 0 to 6 miles, and a compass rose. The title "THE BATTLE OF ARRAS" is prominently displayed across the center.

**Geographical Features:**

- Rivers:** Somme, Scarpe, Arras Canal.
- Topography:** Ridge, Hill, and various smaller hills and valleys.
- Infrastructure:** Roads, railways, and bridges.

**Key Locations and Towns:**

- North:** Lens, Noyelles, Fouquiere, Montigny-en-Gohelle, Liévin, Givenchy-en-Gohelle, Vimy, Willerval, Fresnoy, Izel, Neuville, Freneux, Vitry.
- West:** Arras, Citadelle, Fieffes, Mercatel, Bouleux, Hennin, Boiry.
- South:** Arras, Citadelle, Fieffes, Mercatel, Bouleux, Hennin, Boiry, Croisilles, Hendecourt, Riencourt, Oucourt.
- East:** Arras, Citadelle, Fieffes, Mercatel, Bouleux, Hennin, Boiry, Croisilles, Hendecourt, Riencourt, Oucourt.

**Scale and Orientation:**

- Scale:** 0 to 6 Miles.
- Compass Rose:** North arrow pointing towards the top right.

It was decided to resume the assault a few days later. On the 28th the battle began at 4.25 in the morning on the eight miles north of Monchy-le-Preux, in the centre of which lay Rœux and Greenland Hill, about which the defence pivoted. The fighting on these days became more bitter than ever. The Chemical Works, lost

again, resisted all the efforts of the 34th Division, as did also Rœux. While these positions remained in the hands of the Germans all advance south of the Scarpe and in its vicinity was impossible. But even a midnight attack failed to dislodge the defenders of Rœux. The 2nd Division fared no better at Oppy, to the north of Gavrelle, though an initial success was gained. And these insignificant villages came to be well known from the British *communiqués*. The main successes were the splendid defence of Gavrelle, where seven heavy counter-attacks were repulsed, the capture of Arleux-en-Gohelle, and the magnificent defence of a precarious isthmus which the Naval Division had won on the first day of the earlier attack. Lieutenants Pollard and Haine, of the Honourable Artillery Company, both won the V.C. for their attempts to broaden this salient against the resistance of the Fusilier Guards. Their attacks were not only gallant but skilful. At Arleux the Germans lay in sunken roads behind dense wire and fought with all the advantage from the ruined houses. But the Canadians at the end of the day held it firmly. When the battle died down on the 30th, only 1,000 prisoners had been taken, and the heroic struggle had yielded little else.

General Nivelle had now determined to make another bid for the Craonne plateau on 5th May, and Sir Douglas Haig ordered a third attack in support of it. The total length of the front engaged on the 3rd was sixteen miles. The main assault was to be delivered between Fontaine-lez-Croisilles and Fresnoy; but there were attacks near Vimy by the 1st Army and at Bullecourt by the 5th Army. The 18th Division won high praise for its spirited and resolute advance, which began at 3.45 in the morning. The 53rd Eastern County Brigade in a fierce rush carried Cherisy, and over the whole front the troops penetrated deeply into the German defences. North of the Scarpe the 4th Division entered Rœux, and on the extreme north the 1st Canadian Division captured Fresnoy. This was the success of the day, for the village was full of German troops who had been concentrated for a counter-attack.

Later in the day hostile counter-attacks pressed the troops out of Cherisy and Rœux; but Fresnoy was held until the dawn of the 8th, when three German divisions recaptured the village, and it remained in the hands of the enemy. The operations at Bullecourt established the Australians in the German lines to the east of the position. On 5th May the French achieved their objectives; but as no decisive results had followed from the offensive, Sir Douglas Haig was free to resume his interrupted plan. In about a month he had taken 19,500 prisoners, 257 guns (98 being heavies), 464 machine guns, and 227 trench mortars.

The fighting still continued for over a month to cover the new concentration in the Flanders area, and prevent the Germans taking advantage of the mutiny in the French army. On 8th May, towards dusk, the 4th Division delivered the ninth attack upon the Chemical Works and Rœux, and at length this little fortress was captured. Nine days later the very flower of the German army, Brandenburg Grenadiers and Guards, had to admit defeat at Bullecourt, the 58th London Territorials being the division to complete the capture of this ugly knot in the Siegfried Line. They were then able to join hands with the Australians, who had steadfastly held for a fortnight one thousand yards to the east of the town—a feat which, in the words of Sir Douglas Haig, “deserves to be remembered as a most gallant feat of arms.” Three days after this, on 20th May, a series of attacks was begun west of Bullecourt, and by 17th June the Siegfried Line up to Fontaine-lez-Croisilles had



been captured, and the gains of the 3rd Army and the 5th Army were connected and made secure.

The second phase of the Battle of Arras epitomised the British army as it was at the time—glowing heroism, determination, skill, and capacity, but with a great deal too much improvisation. In some places, notably at Bullecourt, the Staff work was very poor. The losses suffered in this period were very heavy, but much of this was due to the handicap of being compelled to carry on an offensive against objectives of little value out of loyalty to the French.

### III. THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

ALL modern battles follow a certain rhythm. There is first the bombardment, emerging from the almost continual desultory shelling which extends over all parts of the battle front. This itself traces usually a sort of curve, growing heavier and heavier until it reaches a pitch at which it is wonderful any nerves can bear it; and then the infantry attack is launched with a gathering head. The struggle works up and reaches a maximum on the second or third day with the recovery of the defence, and then gradually sinks down into the normal activity of the battlefield.

The Battle of Arras followed this course, and the first phase was sinking to rest when the French infantry were gathering themselves together for an attack on another part of the battlefield. Ludendorff had fallen back from the Somme in order to gain a respite from the attacks which he knew were maturing. The victory of Arras showed that he was not to escape scot free, since, although he had skilfully escaped a disadvantageous conflict on his centre, one of the pivots upon which he relied for the success of his manœuvre had been captured. The new attack was directed against the other, the southern pivot. But the attacks differed in numerous points. The southern pivot of the Siegfried Line was the massive bastion of La Fère and Laon, with its centre covered by the forest of St. Gobain. There was nothing comparable to the Vimy Ridge on this flank. The pivot as we have described it was much too extensive and dense to attack. It was not a position so much as a deep area covered by defensive positions, and a frontal attack must have been made at such a disadvantage that the Allies did not attempt it, and Hindenburg guessed correctly that they would not attempt it. Two alternatives presented themselves. One was to pierce the centre between Cambrai and St. Quentin; but this was almost out of the question, since any attack over such broken ground would have left every advantage in the hands of the enemy, and it was probably an operation which Hindenburg had hoped to encourage so that he might hold the Allies on the broken ground in front of his positions and attempt to envelop them from the flanks. For sufficient reasons the attack was not attempted. Another alternative was to attack across the Aisne and attempt to outflank the garrison of the frontal position from the east. It was this operation which General Nivelle had resolved upon, and the heavy bombardment which began on 6th April covered the twenty-five miles between Soissons and Reims.

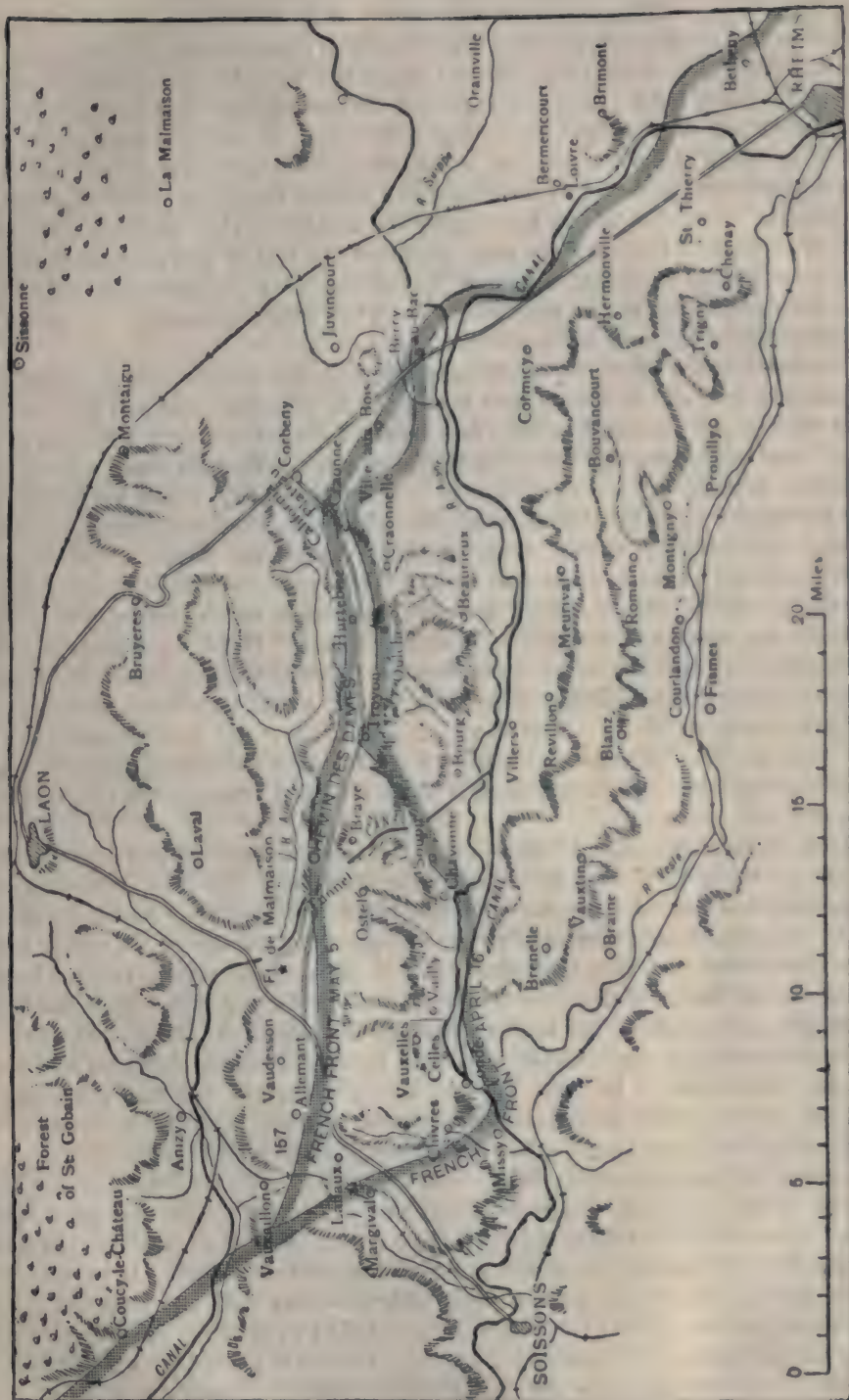
General Nivelle had won fame as the commander of the army which had struck such heavy and successful blows before Verdun in the preceding autumn. It was a strange inconsequence to make him commander-in-chief, though not unusual in

modern war. Nivelle's work had shown a high tactical ability. There was indeed something of genius in his tactical handling of the Verdun army ; but it was merely the development to a high pitch of tactics initiated by Pétain in the Artois. And yet it was Nivelle who was chosen to succeed Joffre, the patient and skilful artificer of the present French military position. He was chosen for his tactical ability, though he ceased, as Commander-in-Chief, to have more than a general influence upon tactics, and was perforce given over to the strategical handling of vast bodies of troops. The second Battle of the Aisne was, so to say, his diploma battle ; and he came out of the test badly. The positions he chose to attack were extremely formidable. They were those which had confronted the British army after the Battle of the Marne, and in so far as they had changed, it was for the worse. Kluck, in January 1915, had thrown the French back towards Soissons. It was merely a local success, but it changed the conditions for advance. And the ground was bad enough to begin with. There were few defensive positions in Europe to rival it. We may picture it to ourselves by imagining a vast comb of which the teeth are composed of huge bosses of chalk and the backbone is the high ridge of the Aisne heights. The spaces between the teeth sloped upwards to the ridge, and were well wooded. There were numerous natural caves in the chalk and some tunnels running through the ridge, as well as others connecting up the caves into a natural fortress of the most formidable pattern. The positions were well wired, and the defenders were provided with numerous machine guns. The caves and tunnels gave admirable shelter, and the same cannot be said of the positions behind the French front. The Germans had for a long time reconciled themselves to fighting defensive battles, and had lengthened the range of their heavy guns, so that from safe positions behind the front they could bombard the Allies' concentrations. The battles of the Somme, in which the guns of the Allies had dominated those of the Germans, had passed. Now the battle order was a tremendous duel in which the rival heavy guns strove with a nearer equality.

Indeed, in this Battle of the Aisne there is evidence that the French heavy guns were never sufficient. Although the battle gave, as the result of four weeks' fighting, very important gains of territory, it was a most costly adventure, and General Nivelle was superseded at the end. It seems that the preparation was far from being as skilful as was needed. Hindenburg had circumvented the Allies more than was admitted at the time, and Nivelle refused to change a plan at least half of which could not be attempted. He had delayed the offensive long enough to allow Ludendorff to make the original plan impossible to carry out ; but now he refused to wait a few days longer to secure better weather and make the preparations complete. Reports were current later of the disorganisation behind the battle front. For soldiers who had known the splendid precision of the arrangements behind the Verdun front, it must have been extremely disturbing to find roads blocked and impassable exactly when they should have been working like well-ordered railway lines. At any rate, M. Painlevé, the French War Minister, later made a frank but most damning exposure of the way the offensive had been conducted.

That it was destined to achieve most important results is clear. Laon was numbered among the objectives of the first day. The French were to push up the gap between Craonne and the Aisne, turn the positions left and right, and take the front about St. Quentin in the rear. General Nivelle was confident that he was about to achieve a decision. The " Young Turks " of the French army were tired of Joffre





Country between Soissons, Reims, and Laon where Main French Attacks were made.

and Foch. Their methods were too leisurely. Nivelle's Verdun methods were the chosen model. In his note prepared for the British Government, Nivelle first brushed aside the suggestion which Mr. Lloyd George had raised at the Rome Conference, early in January, for a heavy reinforcement of the Italian front and an attempt to put Austria out of the fight, and then proceeded: "We can break the German front when we like, so long as we do not attack the strongest point, and so long as we perform the operation by surprise and a violent attack, in twenty-four or forty-eight hours." But when the time came Nivelle knew that half his plan was no longer feasible, and the Germans were informed of half the operations still proposed. Mangin was asking for better weather; but all the other prominent generals doubted if the plan had a chance in any weather. Thus in an atmosphere of doubts and misgivings the offensive was launched.

It is possible the offensive might have succeeded if the original plan could have been carried out, and if Russia had been able to take the field at the same time; but as she was not prepared to take any serious action, the enemy was able to profit by the inactivity. At one time the Germans clearly thought they were about to conclude a separate peace with Russia; and though the mood led them not so much to withdraw troops as to turn all their channels of reserves flowing westwards, this was a sufficiently serious consideration. Above the Aisne, Hindenburg had massed numbers of heavy guns, and he had still ample reserves at hand in the area. After the battle the Germans published captured orders which showed how grandiose had been the dreams of the French commanders. "The hour has come," wrote General Nivelle; and one of his subordinates, General Passaga, thus addressed his brigade commanders: "The action which we are about to enter is decisive of the fate of the Fatherland. . . . The days . . . will follow one another until the decision." Nivelle had announced his objectives to the Government as he did in the December attack at Verdun, and the gist of his plan and expectations filtered through to the people.

At one point, about Condé and Vailly, the German lines dipped over the Aisne. This strong bridgehead had defied the first attacks of Sir John French in 1914, and he had determined to reduce it when it was decided that he might do more good in Flanders. Sir Douglas Haig was responsible for the curve which the line east of Condé made towards the north. It was owing to his superb tactical handling that the British line (and the French after it) was, at Troyon, lifted up to the Chemin des Dames, and lay along the higher slopes of the ridge. At Berry-au-Bac the line crossed the Aisne and ran south-east, resting below the hills of Brimont and Nogent l'Abbesse, north-east of Reims. To free Reims from the German guns was one of the least of the French objects in the great attack. A decisive victory, which Nivelle visualised, would have come nearer the liberation of France.

The weather was extremely bad when the attack on this long line began. It was cold enough to freeze the ground, but not consistently cold enough to keep it frozen. Sleet and snow alternated with hard frost, and soft snow lay in the hollows when the French infantry went forward with incomparable dash. It was the worst possible weather for an advance against such positions, and not only did the men suffer from the treacherous state of the ground, but even when positions were won the guns could not easily be advanced. Yet on the first day of the attack, Monday, 16th April, the French seized all the first line between Soissons and Craonne, and even the second line about Juvincourt. The point of the French thrust was directed



in this quarter with the aim of cutting through the German front. If it had succeeded, the Champagne armies would have been cut off from those which were holding the Hindenburg Line about St. Quentin and La Fère. But it did not succeed, and the attack against the line which threatened Reims made very little progress. It must not be gathered that the day was a failure, except judged by the course it was meant to follow, and the losses sustained by the French. The caves in which the Germans had sheltered from the French guns proved to have certain disadvantages, since 10,000 prisoners were gained.

For the offensive Nivelle had two armies on the front between the Ailette and Reims, under General Micheler, who had commanded the 10th Army in the Battle of the Somme. The 4th Army of General Mangin, who had won fame in command of the army group which carried out the Verdun attacks in October and December, lay about the angle which the German positions made east of Soissons. On his right was the 5th Army of General Mazel in front of the eastern end of the Chemin des Dames Ridge, and as far as Béthény, north-east of Reims. The 10th Army of Duchesne lay behind in reserve, ready to take the field when the door between Craonne and the Aisne should be opened. East of Reims lay the 6th Army of Anthoine, on the left of Pétain's central group. It was Anthoine's rôle to engage the right flank while the troops were pouring through the gap upon Laon. General Anthoine, who had first become generally known in this battle, had been Chief of Staff to Castelnau at Morhange and Nancy. He moved with Castelnau to the north of the line after the Marne, and later commanded the 10th Corps in the Argonne and served under Micheler on the Somme. He had been in charge of the pursuit between the Somme and the Oise.

The German forces holding this front were the 7th Army, from La Fère to Craonne, under General von Boehn, and the 1st Army under General Fritz von Below from Craonne to Champagne. Both belonged to the Crown Prince's group, which held the front between the Oise and Verdun. The Germans had twenty-nine divisions between the Ailette and the Moronvilliers *massif*, which, at the time, would have an infantry strength of about 222,000. Some six additional divisions were thrown into the battle for the Aisne heights, making a total strength of between 260,000 and 270,000. To each corps was attached a battalion of *stosstruppen*, shock troops, of picked, specially trained men, to form the spearhead of attacks or counter-attacks. On the French side Nivelle disposed of units which, in the aggregate, must have totalled 1,200,000 men; and they were provided with a lighter form of tank for use in the plain east of Craonne.

The preliminary bombardment had opened on the 6th between the Ailette and Reims. Four days later it was extended to Auberive; and on the 15th it raged with unprecedented severity over the whole 50-mile front. The intention was to mislead the Staff as to the actual sector which was to be attacked, and this was carried a step further by the launching of only the two western armies, Mangin's and Mazel's, on the 16th. The success of the different units on the first day was unequal and never approached Nivelle's expectations. Colonial troops on the extreme left took Moisy Farm and threw a cincture about Laffaux, but prompt counter-attacks drove them back. At Chavonne, where the line crossed the Aisne, the troops entered the village and clung to the houses near the river. Chasseurs fought through the fir wood of Mont des Sapin on the eastern slopes of the spur and approached the Cour de Soupir Farm, which had become a formidable fortress.

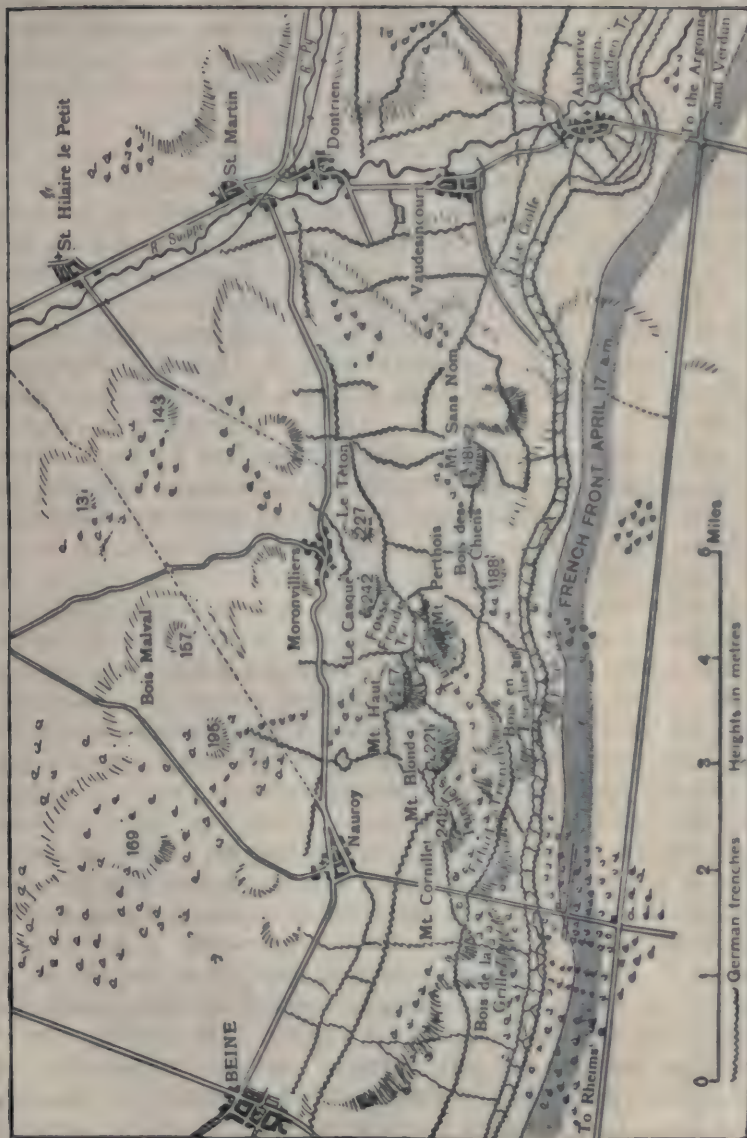
The Moroccans debouched from Troyon along the Chemin des Dames above Chivy. The narrow spur on which this village lies had been stormed, and the Moroccans found the garrison of Chivy retiring through a tunnel under the crest of the ridge. With a fierce rush they blocked the northern exit and captured 200 men. Farther east, about midway between Troyon and Craonne, colonial troops achieved one of the great successes of the day. At Hurtebise Farm the ridge reaches its highest point—about 650 feet—at a narrow neck, 100 yards wide. The farm was gallantly captured, though hand-to-hand fighting continued in the tunnel through the ridge below the farm buildings.

Still farther east the troops were able to gain a precarious hold on some of the outlying houses of Craonne. Above this terrible village which was to cause so much bloodshed was the California plateau; and it was on this spot Napoleon had fought his unsuccessful battle with Blücher in 1814. It was only realised as the battle wore on how much turned upon the capture of this position, whose guns swept the gap through which the troops were to have advanced upon Laon. To open the road to Laon the positions on either side had to be taken—Ville-aux-Bois and Juvincourt. Two outliers of the Aisne Ridge, Bois des Buttes and Bois des Boches, lay in advance of Ville-aux-Bois. Skilfully entrenched and wired, with galleries extending as deep as sixty feet, they were very terrible obstacles in the hands of the Bavarians. But at the end of the day the 31st Infantry Regiment (Parisians) had stormed the Bois des Buttes, and by means of incendiary bombs compelled 800 Bavarians to emerge from their dug-outs and surrender. Tanks swept up to Ville-aux-Bois, though many were put out of action, and the troops began to work up the Miette stream towards Juvincourt.

South of Berry-au-Bac the French front turned south-east in front of Reims. On this sector the objectives were forts Brimont and Fresnes. Loivre and Bermericourt, which lie on the northern flank of Brimont, were captured, but the second was lost in a counter-attack. Lochwitzky's Russian brigade stormed and held Courcy and its château, below the hill on which Brimont stands. And there the successes of the day ended. The capture of 11,000 prisoners and many guns was not the same as the opening of that door which would have given the troops a clear sweep to Laon.

On Tuesday, the 17th, the French consolidated their positions under a series of counter-attacks, and in the evening a vigorous assault by French and Senegalese troops carried Les Grinons, a western underwork of the Chavonne spur. But the second stage of Nivelles's offensive had now begun. South of the village of Moronvilliers lie a group of hills, the highest being Mont Haut (840 feet), which emerge from the high ground east of Reims about Prunay and extend westward almost to the Suippe above Auberive. As an obstacle to an advance they form but one feature, a *massif*; and they were cunningly knit together with entrenchments and redoubts, fortified by wire and concrete forts, tunnelled to a depth which ensured complete security against bombardment. It was across the twelve miles between Prunay and the St. Hilaire-St. Souplet road that Anthoine's 6th Army struck on Tuesday. Its *rôle* was to smash the eastern flank of the gap about Craonne. Its local and immediate object was to relieve Reims by turning the heights from Brimont to Nogent l'Abbesse. Its actual result was that for ten miles the first, and for seven the second, defensive line was carried. On the left the corps of Hely d'Oissel was only in possession of the first line at nightfall. The Gascons of Lobit's division





The Moronvilliers Hills, with the German Trench System (objective of the French right attack).

reached the summits of Mont Cornillet and Mont Blond ; but could only hold the second, the lower. The African troops of Naulin's division seized and held the wooded sides of Mont Perthois, which lies in advance of Mont Haut. Farther east Parisians and Gascon troops pushed up to Le Casque and Le Teton below the village of Moronvilliers, and enabled the Moroccans of Degoutte's division to storm in an hour the summit of Mont Sans Nom, the "nameless hill." Over the whole front between the Ailette and Auberive there had, up to this point, been nothing but tactical successes—no gains, that is to say, which had any bearing on the Western front as a whole beyond a local and inappreciable weakening.

On Wednesday, the 18th, the whole of the battle front between the Ailette and Auberive was ablaze. Mangin's army made another splendid spurt forward across the Vregny spur below Laffaux, and captured Nanteuil-la-Fosse ; and crossed the Aisne east of Vailly and took that village, finding tables spread for a meal, letters waiting for the post, and every sign of a surprise. Chavonne fell to them, as well as the plateau between Ostel and Braye. Farther east Ville-aux-Bois was captured, and the Bois des Boches by that same superb 31st Regiment which had shown such dash on the first day and by this time had secured 1,500 prisoners and much material. Anthoine's troops secured both summits of Mont Haut, and the Foreign Legion cleared the positions west of Auberive. On the next day the colonials entered Laffaux. Cond, the post on the river which had been held from the retreat in 1914, was evacuated, and the fort was blown up. The villages of Aizy and Jouy above were taken, and the whole of the Aisne was clear of the Germans except the small garrison at Celles, which was surrounded. But the Germans still held the ends of the Chemin des Dames and the bulk of the ridge. On the Reims front the battle had been allowed to die down ; but farther east the summit of Le Teton was captured, and Auberive was occupied. The only success of the 20th was the capture of the village of Sancy, a little north of Nanteuil-la-Fosse, by Mangin's troops.

The German counter-attacks were first directed towards the eastern end of the Aisne Ridge. As the French were clearing the Vregny plateau, on the 19th, fierce counter-attacks were delivered towards Hurtebise Farm, west of Craonne, and between Juvincourt and the Aisne. In both quarters the Germans failed to recover lost ground ; but the latter attack was made by about four divisions, some 30,000 men, and it served the secondary purpose of arresting the French advance.

At the end of the first week the French were in possession of the strong point west of Craonne, Hurtebise Farm, a name which no one can ever forget from its almost innumerable repetitions in the official *communiqués*. The French were now in possession of all the commanding points on the Chemin des Dames, and there began that long-continued series of attacks upon them which made the ground almost as bloodstained as the foreground of Verdun. The positions which gave the French observation over the northern slopes of the ridge had the effect of keeping the enemy in a constant state of nervousness as to a renewal of the offensive. They also compelled him to keep a greater number of troops there, and the German counter-attacks seem to have had for their aim the production of a conviction in the mind of the French that their cause was hopeless. Certainly they made the development of the French successes extremely difficult, and impeded that consolidation which was so necessary after a bitter struggle on such broken ground. The next week saw a pause for reorganisation. Duchesne's 10th Army had taken over the sector between Hurtebise and Craonne on the third day of the battle, and the



divisions required time to fill their gaps before resuming the battle. They could not continue for the moment, but neither could they definitely break off the battle, since the positions were not sufficiently strong to be held without loss. The troops had either to go forward or to retire. Craonne and the plateaux above it were still in German hands. While that was the case neither the positions on the ridge nor those at Ville-aux-Bois were safe against a sudden counter-attack nor secure from well-directed artillery fire.

Nivelle had already failed. The losses \* had been much heavier than the present successes could justify. And the French Commander-in-Chief had given the Government the standards by which to judge him. Laon was still as far off as ever, as far off as the chances of a decision. A wave of pessimism swept over France, and the Government having lost confidence in their chief commander, held a conference with him on the evening of the 28th. M. Ribot, the Premier, and M. Painlevé, the new Minister of War, a man of rare courage as subsequent events were to show, soon made up their minds. On the 30th they re-established the position of Chief of the General Staff at the Ministry of War, a position similar to that held by Sir William Robertson. General Pétain was named as the first holder of the post, and his duties were to act as technical adviser to the Cabinet in all plans suggested by commanders-in-chief. A new policy was to be inaugurated, or rather there was to be a reversion to the old one of limited offensives—"nibbling," as it had been called. This and the grave dissatisfaction with Nivelle led to Pétain's appointment as Commander-in-Chief on 15th May, with Foch as his successor. Fayolle, the distinguished commander on Rawlinson's right, succeeded Pétain in charge of the central armies.

But the battle did not cease. Haig was continuing the struggle at Arras to cover a new attempt to round off the French successes. Anthoine's army secured some tactical gains on the last day of the month. Another attempt by Breton troops on the extreme left failed to capture La Grille Wood, and it was not cleared for another week. But the summit of Mont Cornillet was at length won, and the summit of Mont Perthois. On 4th May the new attempt began. The eastern end of the ridge had to be taken, and the attack was launched between Craonne and Brimont. Craonne at last fell, and the California plateau, 100 feet above it to the north-west, was reached. A prompt and vigorous counter-attack was crushed and 700 prisoners were taken. The next day the battle became general along the ridge, but the most valuable success was the extension of the hold on the California plateau. On the 6th the French went over the plateau at the Craonne end and took Chevreux in the plain. The whole ridge, with the exception of some parts of the northern fringes and a sector about Malmaison fort, was now held. Up to 28th April 20,780 prisoners, 175 guns, 119 trench mortars, and 412 machine guns had been taken, and over 6,000 prisoners were added in these three days of May. During the next fortnight the counter-attacks were almost incessant. On 20th May the whole of the Moronvilliers *massif* was in French hands. "A severe blow," says Ludendorff, "as they afforded a view to the north, right over the whole country." † An attack by three new divisions carried the remaining positions that day, and on descending the northern slopes of Cornillet the Zouaves found the elaborate tunnel through it had become a grave for its garrison. The 600 troops in it had been asphyxiated by the French gas shells. This was but one item in the German casualty lists.

\* The French losses, April 16-25th, amounted to 96,125, over half being from Mazel's army.

† *My Memories*, p. 425.

Pétain continued to improve the French positions, though with much greater caution and skill. But at this point the great offensive had passed into the long struggle which raged for the next four months on the Aisne Ridge. General Nivelle had been allowed a month's grace before being superseded. The Aisne Ridge was firmly in French hands. The Moronvilliers *massif* was securely held, and the positions had been improved about Reims. But the beautiful old city, with its perfect cathedral, in which the coronations of French kings used to take place, with its memories of Clovis and Joan of Arc, had not been liberated. Indeed the Germans apparently endeavoured to prove this by hurling thousands of shells into the cathedral. A wave of depression went over France as the losses incurred in the offensive began to be known. But it must not be lightly concluded that the German losses were much smaller. Their losses were so heavy that between the British and French offensives the new small hoard of divisions which Hindenburg had accumulated against emergency faded away like snow in the sun, and the Russian inactivity alone saved the Germans from defeat.\* There was no counter-offensive. Still the French dissatisfaction was so great that on 7th July M. Painlevé made in the Chamber a statement which must stand as a unique speech for its candour, and not less for its balance. These days were days of crisis in both camps. Only two days later, it will be remembered, the Kaiser was holding the first Crown Council since the beginning of the war, and the German people were endeavouring to force the Government to accept a peace resolution by a threat of not voting the credits.

M. Painlevé said: "In the last four months we have victoriously passed the most dangerous turning-point in the war. When the Government came into power Russia, through her troubles, was struck with paralysis, which treason threatened to aggravate. It was inevitable that there should be a long period in which the new Russia was feeling its way. During this time, Germany had her hands free. Look at the line of fire. We have not retreated at any point, but it is the enemy who has retreated. Since such a peril has been surmounted,† and since the hour of danger is behind us, how should we have any doubts about the future? . . . It is because we are certain of the future that we have nothing to fear and can look facts in the face. Yes, grave mistakes were made in the course of the last offensive, in which heavy losses were sustained—too cruel losses, no doubt, because they ought to have been avoided. The leaders on whom the responsibility rested, and the Commander-in-Chief first of all, were relieved. . . . Every bad mistake must be punished. The same justice, equal for all, must strike those who are guilty. There must be no more ambitious plans whose grandiose proportions thinly conceal their emptiness and lack of preparation. We must have a rational and positive war policy, of which the prudence is equal to its energy, which does not demand the impossible but which draws from the war machine its maximum effect. That policy is ours. The method fruitful in results and economical in human life will inspire our armies."

These were courageous words, and the ringing tone of the rest of the speech and eulogy of General Pétain served to relieve the prevailing depression. The offensive-defensive which was outlined as the new French military policy was merely a reversion to the character of the type of warfare pursued by Joffre. Indeed the whole theory of the limited offensive, described more popularly as "nibbling,"

\* *My Memories*, p. 427.

† How oddly such courageous words sound now. Russia's abortive offensive in July was her last effort in the war.



was that of Joffre. It did not contemplate any immediate attempts to break through the defensive areas of Hindenburg, but sought to profit by local weaknesses here and there in the line. Another conspicuous example of the strategy had been given the month preceding that in which M. Painlevé made his speech. The British had, at a bound, reconquered the whole of the Wyttschaete Ridge. But by this time General Pétain had been in harness for some time, and was reorganising the command, and nursing his troops back to confidence and discipline.

On 22nd May the French reconquered the last observation positions on the Moronvilliers *massif*. The usual German counter-attacks were delivered, and on 30th May a few trench sections were recaptured; but on the following day the French recovered them. The first days of June were occupied by counter-attacks against all the new positions; but they were unsuccessful, and on 7th June the centre of interest was abruptly transferred to the British sector of the front where the infantry were beginning the attack on Wyttschaete Ridge.

Nivelle's fault was that he underestimated the strength of the positions and the troops which confronted him. It seems almost incredible that he should have held it possible to reach Laon in a day, for over the Ailette was another ridge which could have been held if the Aisne heights had been captured by a *coup de main*. A series of carefully planned battles with limited objectives might have given what an over-daring stroke failed to do. Many were clamouring for unity of command at this time. Nivelle had been made commander-in-chief for the operations, and though this was not known at the time, his failure should have convinced people of some of its perils.

**The Aftermath.**—The sector of Nivelle's offensive was not allowed to sink to rest for over three months. Hardly a day passed without its violent attack on some part of the new French line, and we are driven to the conclusion that this marked persistence had in it something of the spirit which had inspired Verdun. The Germans seemed determined to make France "bleed to death," and to drive home the lesson which Painlevé's courageous confession had expressed. From this long-drawn-out struggle three episodes seem to detach themselves. Hurtebise, California plateau, and the west end of the ridge had been attacked over and over again when, on 3rd July, a German attack was delivered on a front of about eleven miles from Malmaison to Craonne. The spur above Hurtebise (Hurtebise finger) had been captured by the French on 25th June, and this acted as a sort of trigger to General von Boehn's attack, which beginning about Hurtebise developed into a general assault along the whole ridge. Six divisions supported the shock troops; but after some vicissitudes in a day of fierce fighting the French positions were restored.

On 19th July another heavy attack was delivered, on this occasion on the six-mile eastern half of the ridge. In spite of severe losses the Germans, after fierce hand-to-hand fighting, secured a foothold on the California plateau and were not to be driven off by counter-attack. The Prussian Guard with the 15th Bavarians and 57th Reserve attempted to improve the position; but their success was short-lived, for two days later they were pushed back to the lower ground. But the struggle was not yet over, and the attacks and counter-attacks in this area still dragged on for weeks, without making any sensible change in the positions.

The third episode concerns the ground farther east where General Gouraud, who had won distinction in the Dardanelles, had been in charge since 7th June. A fortnight later he carried out a skilful attack by means of which he was able to cut

off an element of the German position which jutted in between the French lines on Monts Cornillet and Blond. On 14th July, France's day, he anticipated Below's counter-attack, and at the same time cleared the col between Monts Haut and Blond as he had that between Cornillet and Blond. Counter-attacks followed each other in quick succession; but Gouraud had established himself securely on the Moronvilliers *massif* and held his positions. He was learning the lie of the ground which was to become, a year later, a stone of stumbling for the Germans.

#### IV. AMERICA INTERVENES.

It is an extraordinary testimony to the progress of civilisation in spite of all obstacles that in the spring of 1917, when the world's greatest war had been grinding the youth of Europe to powder for nearly three years, the great Republic on the western rim of the Atlantic should have chosen to cast in her lot with the Allies. The adhesion of Italy when Russia's doom seemed sealed in 1915 was an arresting act of faith in the forces that make for the world's betterment. But Italy had great material interests immediately at stake. There were her unredeemed lands on the northern and eastern frontiers; her national ambitions in the eastern borders of the Adriatic, in Albania and Asia Minor; her aspirations towards an enlarged power in the Mediterranean basin.

But with the United States the case was far different. She had no territory of her own to redeem, but only that of others; no ambitions for national expansion, no aspirations for enlarged power. Her sole ambition was for that patrimony of freedom which the world had carefully husbanded only to see it challenged and defied by a militarist clique of Europe. The revolution of Russia will ever rank as one of the world's greatest episodes, but the sober judgment of history will be forced to reckon it as secondary to the adhesion of the United States of America to the Allied cause. The Russian revolution, it is true, was inspired by a lofty idealism, but at first this tended to be largely chaotic, anarchic, and selfish. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that America's intervention was an act of calm and considered policy, but also of the loftiest altruism. Politically and morally it was of extraordinary significance. But, militarily, its importance was almost great enough to counterbalance that weakening and supineness which set in on the Eastern front when the revolution had swept away the old sanctions of discipline without devising new.

Mr. Wilson broke off relations with Germany in February, and it was not until 2nd April that he made his historic speech in Congress asking that a state of war be declared to exist. The two months' interval was filled with momentous events both for the belligerents and for the United States; but few people outside America failed to be puzzled by Mr. Wilson's tactics, and his speech therefore came almost as a surprised anti-climax. Logically, it seemed clear that when diplomatic relations were broken off, the entry of America into the war was merely a matter of time. An "overt act" must occur sooner or later, either by chance or design. If a definitely American ship was sunk, that would surely be "overt," and equally so would be the sinking of American citizens on board Allied ships. But actually lives were lost on Allied vessels, indisputably American lives, and Mr. Wilson did not take



action. In the second week of March the *Algonquin*, an American steamer, was sunk ; but no action was taken. The *Vigilancia*, another American vessel, was sunk in the next week, and several American citizens lost their lives, the survivors being left for almost three days in open boats. Still no action was taken.

Even in America this event was thought to be decisive, and some American newspapers, as well as many British, gave expression to scornful comments. But Mr. Wilson allowed the events to sink home. He had determined from the first to act only when he had the country with him ; and Germany's repeated acts of provocation were not lost, but went to swell the volume of resentment against her. Mr. Wilson made an attempt to see how far a middle way would be acceptable. An Armed Neutrality Bill was introduced into Congress, passed by an overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives, but was talked out by a handful of objectors in the Senate. This was made possible by the fact that the life of Congress expired on 4th March. The Bill provided for the arming of American ships ; and the gunners might be taken to turn the merchant vessels into men of war. It produced an impossible position even when adopted ; but the fact that, as Mr. Wilson said, " a single member can stand in the way of any action if he have but physical endurance " was sufficiently disturbing. " The result in this case is complete paralysis of the legislative and executive branches of the Government." But, by means of two almost forgotten Acts of the legislature, Mr. Wilson was able to adopt the measures outlined in the Bill. Indeed, it seems clear that action had been taken while, or before, the Bill was in Congress ; and in this case the President's manœuvre seems to have been less an attempt to find a middle course than to feel the pulse of the nation. In either case, he must have been convinced that he did wisely to tread warily.

The resistance to the passage of the Bill seems to have played its part in increasing the feeling in favour of war. This was suggested still more by one of the most maladroit actions of the German Foreign Office. While the Armed Neutrality Bill was yet in Congress, the American Government circulated to the press a copy of a German dispatch that must be given in its entirety.

" On 1st February we intend to begin submarine warfare without restriction. In spite of this, it is our intention to endeavour to keep the United States neutral. If this attempt is not successful, we propose an alliance on the following basis with Mexico :—

" That we shall make war together, and together make peace ; we shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to reconquer her lost territory of New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. The details are left to you for settlement. You are instructed to inform the President of Mexico of the above in the greatest confidence as soon as it is certain that there will be an outbreak of war with the United States, and suggest that the President of Mexico shall on his own initiative communicate with Japan suggesting the latter's adherence at once to this plan, and at the same time offer to mediate between Germany and Japan. Please call to the attention of the President of Mexico that the employment of ruthless submarine warfare now promises to compel England to make peace in a few months. —Zimmermann."

This dispatch, which was dated 19th January, was intercepted as it passed from Count Bernstorff to von Eckhardt, the German Minister of Mexico. While Count Bernstorff was making plausible professions of good faith to keep America from break-

ing off relations, this damning instruction was in Mr. Wilson's hands, and had already convinced him that the German outlook was decades removed from that of the rest of the civilised world. The Germans made matters worse by treating the whole episode as a quite natural, rather clever, piece of foresight, the only fault being that America was allowed to gain possession of the document. But Harden, Germany's only true mirror, stripped the act of its wrappings and laid it bare as a piece of "blind stupidity," part of that long series of amateur dealings with nations that had made her "an abomination in the eyes of the world." And its chief effect was to carry a step nearer to the conviction of the Eastern States the feeling of the more pacific Western and Southern States which were thus offered by Germany to any one who would attack and take them.

The shameless way in which Germany made preparation for attacking the United States, even to the extent of making common cause with any who might stand to gain by war against them, and even suggesting the line the active operations should take, was a revelation to many American citizens. To Europeans, living nearer the area of Germany's normal operations, it was not so surprising as the fact that it could at that point prove a revelation of the enemy's mentality. But the United States had endeavoured from the beginning to keep an honourable neutrality; and charges and countercharges of brutality are among the weapons of all wars. Many people even in the United Kingdom could not grasp the possibility of any nation making so much a fetish of force as Germany before the war. The first few months of actual hostilities and the German behaviour in Belgium were sufficient to carry conviction.

In the United States the conviction took longer to penetrate the mass of the people. But little by little as the war dragged on, the testimony of American representatives came in to the Administration, and must have shown Mr. Wilson the true state of things. Mr. Hoover and Mr. Brand Whitlock, the first the organiser of the Belgian Relief Fund and the second the American Minister in Brussels, must have sent many a report on events which took place almost under their eyes. Such a report on the Deportations at the end of 1916 was made by Mr. Whitlock, and was at hand when Mr. Wilson was coming to a decision. The "foulest deed that history records" was Mr. Whitlock's description of the German deportations; and he made his phrase good in many another summing up of the hideous cruelty of the actual seizures. Little by little Germany had cut herself off from all the restrictions which prevent mankind from sinking back into the slough of barbarism. Though Mr. Wilson might choose to fight on the submarine issue, there can be no doubt that he saw a far graver issue at stake. "The present German warfare against commerce is warfare against mankind; it is a war against all nations."

But even this was not the real gauge. America entered the war with a great gesture "to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world against selfish autocratic power, and to set up amongst really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and action as will from henceforth assure the observance of these principles." So Mr. Wilson spoke on 2nd April when he had ascended the Speaker's rostrum at the Extraordinary Session of Congress convened by him. Of the many great and inspiring speeches made by Mr. Wilson, this was the greatest. In the House were assembled the members of the Supreme Court, the Diplomatic Corps, and the Senate when Mr. Wilson, ascending the Speaker's platform at 8.30, began to read in a dispassionate voice an account of the sequence of events. The atmosphere was electric; but for long it gained no fuel from the



President. He had been received with cheers ; but the tone of his recital was rather that of a lecture than of an occasion which could never be forgotten in the history of the world.

Mr. Wilson reviewed the history of the country's relations with Germany, reminded his hearers that a promise had been given to safeguard the lives of non-combatants at sea—a promise kept but barely in the letter and never in the spirit ; but now even that was revoked. He pointed out the reason and meaning of international law as an apparatus for preserving some semblance of equal dominion of the sea for all. Now Germany had swept this aside, and to the prejudice not only of neutral property but of neutral lives. His expedient of armed neutrality was not only not a remedy—it not only failed to meet the case, but it gave Germany the opportunity of treating the armed men on merchant ships as *francs-tireurs*. They were to be dealt with as pirates. America had to choose her course in the circumstances. Loud applause broke out as the President then said, clearly and calmly : “ We will not choose the path of submission and suffer the most sacred rights of our nation and our people to be ignored and violated. The wrongs against which we now array ourselves are not common wrongs. They cut to the very root of human life. With a profound sense of the solemn and tragical character of the step I am taking, and of the grave responsibilities which it involves, but in unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty, I advise that Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less than war against the Government and the people of the United States, that it formally accept the status of a belligerent which is thus thrust upon it, and that it take immediate steps, not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defence, but also to exert all its power and to employ its resources to bring the Government of the German Empire to terms and end the war.”

He went on to make clear that this statement meant the fullest co-operation with the Allies, financially, materially, and by force of arms. He further expounded the issue in the words already quoted which placed the common enemy in “ selfish, autocratic power.” The menace to peace lies “ in the existence of autocratic Governments backed by organised force which is controlled wholly by their will and not by the will of the people. . . .” “ Only free peoples can hold their purpose and their honour steady to a common end, and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interests of their own.” The elaborate meshes of the spy system and international intrigue were the apparatus only of autocracies under which “ plans of deception carried, it may be, from generation to generation, can be worked out and kept from light within the privacy of courts and behind the carefully-guarded confidences of a narrow privileged class.”

The Russian Revolution had been one of the points that weighed most with him, and he went on to refer to the change which that great episode had introduced into the world. It introduced a new chance of world peace. The Americans entered the war for this. They were friends of the German people ; but now that civilisation was the issue, they must fight.

Mr. Wilson proved himself to be of the succession of inspired orators. His speech created wonderful enthusiasm, and this became obvious when a British and French mission went to the United States to confer with the Government on the measures that would be most advantageous to the Allies. The missions were happy in their personnel, the British including Mr. Balfour, who made a stirring speech

in Congress, and the French including Marshal Joffre. The two missions met with a most cordial reception, and their members were able to suggest to the American administration many things which might not have occurred to them so forcibly.

One question which demanded immediate solution was that of the unrestricted submarine warfare, which had achieved too much success for it to be any but a most grave menace to the Allies' communications. While it speedily became apparent that with America's help much could be done to reduce the sinkings to reasonable dimensions, their incidence could not fail to be grave. There were, however, in United States harbours some 614,000 tons of German shipping; but though this was all seized by the Government authorities during a few hours after a state of war had been declared, the bulk of it had been rendered useless for some time by the Germans. It would represent when available a month of the submarine campaign's sinkings. At the same time the United States began to organise their shipbuilding yards. Active brains had been at work for some time, and one of the suggestions that had been advanced was the construction of numbers of medium size standardised wooden motor vessels for the carriage of freight. Further, a number of submarine chasers were built or building, and within a month after entry into the war a powerful naval squadron under Admiral Sims was at work in British waters. Besides this, the American navy, the third strongest in the world, took over the policing of the coast from Nova Scotia to the Caribbean Sea.

Organisation was the first watchword of the war. To this end America's manhood between the ages of eighteen and thirty was ordered to enrol itself before a given date, and some 10,000,000 men were registered. It was proposed to draw upon this fund as required, and according to system, in order to avoid the unevenness of uncontrolled voluntarism. Mr. Wilson chose universal service in preference to voluntarism as being more economical and more easily controlled in its working. The regular army was to be raised to full establishment of 287,000, and the militia increased to 600,000, both by voluntary enlistment. But besides this, Mr. Wilson's Military Service Bill allowed him to enrol by selective draft up to a million men for home service. The volunteers were to be first used abroad, and it had been decided that some part should make its appearance in France within six months. General Pershing, indeed, arrived in France with his Staff during the second week in June. In one other direction America suggested giving military aid. It was realised at the outset that her help would be best given in so far as it was spontaneous and an outcome of her national genius. The same spirit which gave birth to the fruitful idea of standardised wooden motor vessels soon evolved another suggestion of great value. It was appreciated that success went more readily to surprise, and the possibility of fundamental and strategic surprise made the idea of a tremendous aerial offensive widely favoured. Pilots were at once enrolled and sent to Europe for training, and great energy was thrown into the design and manufacture of aeroplanes.

America's financial help was almost inexhaustible, and it was as promptly and as generously made available. When Mr. Balfour was compelled to return to England, Lord Northcliffe was sent out to act as head of the British missions, and to co-ordinate their work.

But the greatest help that America gave to the Allies was the guarantee to the world that their cause was that of the world, that with their fate was bound up the fate of civilisation. Mr. Wilson had professed his assurance when breaking off



relations with Germany that other neutral states would follow his example. It was certainly the case that the President did not wish to add to the world's sufferings by following up his diplomatic breach by the declaration of a state of war. He may have felt that, if all neutral states would join him, the enemy would realise how terribly he stood to lose after the war, and, moved by this reflection, would accept the terms of the Allies.

Germany herself was responsible for the solidarity which ultimately revealed itself among the American States. Her intrigues in Mexico were followed by attempts to involve the smaller Republics of Central America in war which should ultimately involve the Panama Canal. It was a number of these Republics which first followed Mr. Wilson's lead. Cuba declared war in order to be able to assist the United States. Panama, Costa Rica, and Guatemala offered such assistance as would make them in effect belligerents. Honduras and Nicaragua broke off relations with Germany; but Mexico preserved her attitude of neutrality.

The motive which decided these various States was the interference of a European power with American affairs and that Pan-American solidarity which, as an outcome of the Monroe doctrine, had been making steady strides in recent years. In South America Germany had been spending vast sums for propaganda purposes. Nevertheless the bulk of the States associated themselves more or less directly and promptly with the United States. Bolivia (13th April) broke off relations. Uruguay and Paraguay adopted an attitude of moral sympathy with Mr. Wilson, while adhering to their status of neutrality; but the former broke off relations in October. The A B C States, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, did not react, as was expected, together. Brazil broke off relations and seized the quarter of a million tons of German shipping in her ports, but did not declare war until October. Argentina, in a note to Germany, "recognised the justice of this (Mr. Wilson's declaration of a state of war) decision," and later demanded compensation, apology, and a ceremony of reparation for the sinking of an Argentine vessel. To the general surprise Germany agreed. Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, and Ecuador did not at once associate themselves with the United States; but the two last had broken off relations by the end of the year.

Meanwhile China had severed relations with Germany, and there was a strong body which desired to go to war. But the new Republic was not sufficiently firm on its legs to have any one expression, and it was not until 14th August she declared war. Before the end of the year Siam (22nd July), Liberia (4th August), Greece (August) had declared war, bringing the number of nations at war with Germany to eighteen; and Hayti (June) and San Domingo (11th June) broke off relations, raising the number of these States to ten.

The neutral nations nearer Germany were dominated in the last resort by the fear of what their powerful though declining neighbours might do. In general, it seems just to state that the progressive parties in all were in favour of the Allies. In Spain this was victorious. The spirit of Norway was widely known. The attitude of Mr. Branting showed the mind of Sweden. Switzerland could speak with a less unified expression owing to its large German population; and Mr. Hoffman, her Foreign Minister, was found in June 1917 to be party to a German peace intrigue. But with these exceptions the feeling of the whole world was against the enemy, and was hardening more specifically against the German autocracy and the Hohenzollerns. In this very fact we see the explanation of the reason why Germany

continued the struggle. The controlling power in the country was fighting for its very existence, and could not suffer more from an actual defeat in the field than from a peace which was virtual defeat. And while the war continued there was always the chance of one of the Allies being detached and a victory won thereby.

## V. THE FLANDERS CAMPAIGN: THE STORMING OF MESSINES RIDGE.

THE victory north and south of Arras which drove in the northern pivot of the Hindenburg Line seemed to have been absorbed by the Germans, and the struggle above the Aisne and in Champagne had become part of that restless strife which convulsed the whole front, when Sir Douglas Haig struck once more. The position he chose for attack on this occasion was one which had been more costly to the Allies than any other on the Western front. Out of Sir John French's attempt to outflank the Germans from the direction of Ypres there emerged the titanic struggle of the First Battle of Ypres, which left that beautiful old Belgian town in a salient. The Germans had contrived to force their way westward until their line made a rough semicircle upon the road from St. Eloi which climbs up a ridge some 250 feet to Wytschaete, and passes through Messines. They lay there as far west of Ypres as the line of the Ypres defences lay east of the town. The first gas attack in May 1915 had bitten into the northern flank of the Ypres defences, so that on 7th June, when Sir Douglas Haig struck against the German salient, its westernmost point lay due south of Boesinghe, which was just inside the British line north of Ypres. In between these two points lay that unhappy area about Ypres constantly overlooked from the Messines Ridge, and its continuation across the Menin road, constantly at the mercy of the German guns. Ypres was retained at first almost in that instinctive way which a general has of holding to territory before he realises how tenable it is; and little by little there grew up a sort of prescriptive British title to it. On no other plot of ground had so many of Britain's finest soldiers fallen, and in their blood sentiment had taken root, so that he would have been a bold man who advised its evacuation. It had been considered, but the project was dismissed, and General Plumer's army had nothing to do for two years but defend themselves as best they might against an enemy who could look down upon them from the summit of the ridge, and direct his guns in accordance with his observations.

Sir Douglas Haig, like Sir John French, had singled out Flanders as the best ground for an offensive thrust; but there could be no thrust in this direction while the German guns lay ready to take any concentration in enfilade from the Messines salient. It was, therefore, not only as a defensive measure, nor even only as a local tactical attack, that Sir Douglas determined upon the assault on Messines Ridge. It would alone almost ensure the safety of the Ypres salient for the future, and give observation of the plain of Lille; but it would also clear the flank of an advance from the Ypres area. The battle was, therefore, of supreme importance.

The Flanders campaign was the most ambitious yet undertaken by the British commander. Three armies were to take part in it, the 4th, 5th, and 2nd; and General Anthoine's 1st French Army was to co-operate on the flank of Gough's



army, with the Belgians on his left. General Rawlinson accordingly brought his 4th Army from the extreme right of the British front to the coastal sector, replacing there the French troops. Plumer's 2nd Army was moved southward to face the Messines Ridge, and Gough's 5th Army, which had lain north of Rawlinson's command, took over the Ypres sector from Observatory Ridge to Boesinghe. From this village to Noordschoote the Belgians were replaced by the 1st French Army. Gough was in position at Ypres by 10th June, and in the last week of June Rawlinson was on the coast. The purpose of this concentration was the expulsion of the Germans from the Belgian coast and the restoration of the manœuvre war by breaking through the northern flank of the German positions. Gough was to advance upon Roulers, and at this point Rawlinson would co-operate by breaking through the coastal sector, and in conjunction with tanks landed on the Belgian coast from specially constructed boats, to clear the fortified area up to the Dutch frontier. The advance was to be carried out in a series of bounds, by which it was hoped to carry the various German defensive positions. The Battle of Messines Ridge was an indispensable preliminary to the advance from the Ypres salient, and in this way it was logically a part of the Battle of Flanders, and was linked with the Third Battle of Ypres.

From the sea to the Douve the German line was held by the 4th German Army, under General von Armin, who had distinguished himself as commander of the 4th Corps on the Somme, and we cannot but admire the skill with which he met the greatest threat which had yet been made to the possession of Belgium. Versatile, cool, and resolute, he profited to the full from all the advantages which fate offered him. Armin's army formed the right wing of the Bavarian Crown Prince's group, which held the front as far south as the Oise.

Messines Ridge had remained in undisturbed possession of the Germans for over two years. Its fortifications were almost a hobby of the defenders. The Germans take no avoidable risks, and every lesson which the Somme had taught them had here its part. No attempt had been made to recover the positions which had been held in October 1914 by a weak force of Allenby's cavalry. But there had been preparation. The hill is not high, but defines the horizon, and its slopes had been carefully organised. For a week before the attack the ridge had been shelled; but it was not merely the bombardment of a full blast of guns. It had been carefully arranged to give the Germans the maximum of nervousness and confusion. When it died down who could tell whether the infantry attacks were about to begin? And it died down frequently at one point or another. The full chorus was not used often. We can only guess at the experiences and reactions of the Prussians, Bavarians, and Würtembergers who held the position. Just before the actual attack, which took place at 3 A.M. on 7th June, the bombardment died down. Then there was a resumption of all the guns available—a terrific, hellish chorus; and while the din was at its height and the flashes and flames were lighting the dim sky of morning, some nineteen huge mine explosions shook all the neighbourhood, and the assault began.

Those mines, scientifically built by Lancashire and Welsh miners, have their own lurid story, which no one at present can tell. Some of them were a year old, and had lain a long time waiting the touch that would fire them. In some places there had been attempts to countermine, and the walls of the underground galleries had been worn thinner and thinner until at length they gave way, and fierce primitive

struggles took place between men half clad, armed with stones, spades, and pieces of iron. At times *camouflets*—shallow mines—had been sprung to blow in the enemy's shaft; and one counter-mining venture, after careful calculation, was allowed to proceed, as it was estimated that it would not be ready for use until the British mines had been exploded. There were, it is said, 600 tons of explosive used in the mines, and the explosion was felt as an earthquake, and was registered on the seismographs of Shide Observatory, Isle of Wight. The mines completed an experience of horror that nothing can exceed. The bombardment had not only been prolific, it had also been precise. Day by day the British airmen went up spotting for the gunners, and one squadron alone is reported to have given information owing to which seventy-two German batteries were put out of action. The whole topography of the ridge seems to have been changed; and one wonders, therefore, how the attacks rehearsed with relief models could have found their way in a terrain that was practically featureless.

The attack was delivered over a front of between nine and ten miles, between Observatory Ridge, to the south-east of Ypres, and a point east of Ploegsteert Wood, on the south. The three corps of Plumer's army—Morland's 10th, Hamilton Gordon's 9th, and Godley's 2nd—all took part. For the opening of the attack each corps had three divisions in the front line and one in reserve; and before the end of the day the whole twelve divisions, some 120,000 infantry, had been involved. Eight of the nine divisions which opened the assault had seen hard fighting in the Somme battle. Godley's corps faced Messines, with the 3rd Australian Division (Monash) on the right, the New Zealand Division (Russell) next, and the 25th British Division (Bainbridge) on the left. Hamilton Gordon's right and centre were occupied by the 36th (Ulster) Division, which had fought so fine an action at Thiepval on the opening day of the Somme battle, and the 16th (Irish) Division, which had taken Guillemont. These two divisions faced Wytschaete, with Shute's 19th Division, the victors of La Boisselle, on their left. Morland's corps, on the left, had the south country 41st Division, which had taken Flers, about St. Eloi; the 47th London Territorial Division, with its hard-won fame of Loos and High Wood, farther north; and the north country 23rd Division, which had captured Contalmaison, on the extreme left. General von Laffert's 4th German Corps held the German line, and on 1st June he issued the order that "these strong points must not fall even temporarily into the enemy's hands." The garrison of the line was very small, but Laffert had considerable reserves at his disposal. Armin's theory of the defensive turned upon the holding of the line in light strength, and delivering heavy counter-attacks when the impetus of the assaulting troops had been broken in their struggle with the garrisons of the positions.

As the range of the guns changed at 3.20 the masked men went forward into the gas-drenched area, and with little trouble the New Zealand Rifle Brigade followed the barrage into Messines, dug in on the east, and set themselves to clear the dug-outs in the village. The 25th Division, which, being near the deepest part of the curve, had farthest to go, was too quick for the German barrage, and, like the New Zealanders, had captured all its objectives by eight o'clock. The two Irish divisions swept ahead up the slopes and through Wytschaete. It was at this point that Major Willie Redmond, brother of the Irish leader, fell. He went forward, in a momentary check, and was shot. A charming personality and a very gallant soldier, he was seen to wave his men on as he fell. With the Irish troops





Sketch showing General Scheme of the Attack on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge

on their right, the 19th Division carried all their objectives, and suffered their only trouble by falling under their own barrage through over-eagerness. Morland's 41st Division saw hard fighting at the fortified Dammstrasse, but not so hard as that which met the Territorials of the 47th Division, who, attacking astride the Ypres-Comines Canal, met a fierce resistance in the ruins of the White Château. This division, and the 23rd on the left, had not a great distance to cover ; but it was done efficiently and economically.

No sooner were the first objectives won than the artillery was moved forward. On the right a weak counter-attack was broken about noon, and about 3.15 two brigades from the 4th Australian Division, Godley's reserve, moved through the line about Messines, advanced down the eastern slopes, but, losing direction a little, left an un-reduced post between them. Farther north the 33rd Brigade of the 11th Division, Gordon's reserve, advanced a further 2,000 yards to near Oosttaverne, which the 19th Division carried ; and Morland's reserve division carried the left to the Oosttaverne line. By the afternoon all the objectives had been carried, and on this single day 7,200 prisoners, including 145 officers, 67 guns, 294 machine guns, and 94 trench mortars were captured. The battle was instructive in many ways. General Harington, Plumer's Chief of Staff, added a new touch of precision to the arrangements. It marked in many ways the high-water mark of British efficiency. In the Arras battle, which extended over fifteen miles, 13,000 prisoners were taken in six days. In Nivelle's offensive on a front of forty miles, 20,780 prisoners were captured in twelve days. The Battle of Messines Ridge, therefore, represents one of the most perfect actions fought on the Western front, and the losses were about 16,000, a comparatively small casualty list. Even at Arras the losses were some 40 per cent. less than in similar attacks on the Somme.

In Messines was found an order insisting that the 17th Bavarian Division should hold on at all costs. What the battle cost the Germans is not known ; but it must have been considerably higher than the British casualty list, and the results of the battle were all that the British command expected. They were less than the German Staff expected, for it is now clear that an immediate crisis might have been produced if the first successes had been followed up. But throughout the war the Allies never secured that mobility which would have enabled them to seize upon the disorganization which was frequently produced.

East of the new British line tanks were patrolling when, in the early morning of the day following the battle, a German counter-attack was delivered. But it was not until 7 P.M. that the general counter-attack was made after a fierce bombardment. Both were crushed, and in the next four days the new positions were consolidated, including the village of Gapaard. The Germans were now found to be evacuating their old lines between the Lys and St. Yves, on the southern part of Plumer's flank, and these positions were occupied by the 14th, in the evening of which day local attacks astride the Ypres-Comines Canal and east and south of Messines were delivered. Both attacks were successful, and rounded off all that it was desirable the 2nd Army should at present undertake.



## VI. THE FLANDERS CAMPAIGN: THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.

It is safe to say that, whatever shall befall Britain in the future, the name of Ypres will ever be memorable in her history. It was at Ypres that in 1914 the victory of the Marne was sealed. It was at Ypres that the glorious 7th Division, after three weeks' fighting, lost some 10,000 of her 12,000 men. It was at Ypres that the Worcesters made their splendid rally which carried the struggle past the critical moment when the line was broken by the almost irresistible pressure of German infantry and guns. The First Battle of Ypres was the most critical of all the battles fought in all the earlier stages of the war, and the British victory told the world that the German army, Bavarians and Guards included, with the greatest preponderance of numbers and guns, could not succeed when they fought *à outrance*. There can be no doubt that the enemy wished to cut his way through to the coast. He brought up as many troops as he could take from other parts of the Western theatre of war, and accumulated as many guns as he had at his disposal—but he was beaten back.

It was at Ypres that the Germans augmented their numerous infamies by adding clouds of poisonous gas to their repertoire of military weapons, and they gained by their surprise more than they could win by every advantage in a straight fight. Indeed, the irony of the situation was only appreciated by them some time after. All that they desired might have been theirs for the asking. A resolute following up would have probably given them the coast. But apparently they had not expected so great a success. They had not prepared for it, and the moment passed. For three years the British had maintained themselves at Ypres when mere military prudence would have suggested its evacuation, because British sentiment had taken root in the fine old town and could not bear to abandon it. But it had been a death trap. All the observation positions were in the hands of the enemy, an ever-watchful window upon the town and the troops that passed through it. The Battle of Messines Ridge relieved the position considerably by capturing all the observation positions on the south-west and pressing out the line until Ypres was a salient no longer. But this was only a stage in one of the most important campaigns of the war.

The adoption of the unrestricted submarine campaign gave an additional importance to Ostend and Zeebrugge, and the small strip of Belgian coast which lay in the enemy's hands. If it could be taken, at least a third of the power of the campaign would be lost. Deprived of these bases, the submarines could not make such successful inroads upon the Channel and Mediterranean traffic. This was one of the reasons which tended to focus the eyes of the world upon Flanders. But, further, the question of the war during 1917 became more and more one of Belgium. The grandiose German schemes of conquest began to fade in the light of the cost demanded for their realisation. The majority resolution in the Reichstag had based itself on no annexations, and Belgium was the chief possibility of this sort. Further, unless Belgium was to be restored to full independence, the Allies were clearly defeated and aggressive militarism was triumphant. Finally, the Memoir of Bissing, Governor-General of Belgium, who died in the spring of 1917, showed that the militants, or at any rate an influential section of them, were bent on retaining Belgium.

The Allies' plans had wavered in the choice of objectives, but the British had ever looked with favour upon the Belgian field since Sir John French first ordered

Sir Henry Rawlinson to advance upon Menin, a task which was utterly disproportionate to his force at the time. It was, therefore, commonly and rightly current rumour in July 1917 that Sir Douglas Haig intended to strike in Belgium. The victory of Messines Ridge had prepared the way for an offensive farther north, since it removed the long-established threat to Ypres. If the ridge had not been taken, any advance from Ypres would have accentuated the salient and would have come under enfilade fire directed from the higher ground with full observation facilities. An advance in Belgium had the choice of a fairly wide front, but part of it—from about Dixmude to the coast—was the flooded area; and an advance along the coast would have had to make its way against accumulated batteries concealed under the swell of land which runs roughly parallel to the coast, west of Bruges, as well as all the numerous guns laboriously placed on the dunes. The third alternative was to advance from the Lys to near Dixmude in a north-easterly direction. Rumour, however, right in general, was wrong in detail. The attack was to be made in Belgium, but not along the coast unless and until the attack from Ypres had achieved sufficient success. But it was the conviction that the coastal area was to witness the main thrust which gave a totally wrong value to a local attack made by the Germans north of the Yser where it flows into the sea.

Rawlinson's army took over the coastal sector from the French preparatory to an advance, though not an immediate advance, along the coast. On 9th July, while the British artillery was not yet concentrated and the French had been removed, the Germans suddenly opened an intense bombardment upon the positions which had been established on the north bank of the Yser, between Nieupoort and the sea. At 6 o'clock on the following morning the bombardment became more intense, sought out the little cover that could be built in the sand dunes and obliterated it, and destroyed the bridges behind the battalion across the river. At 3 P.M. the intensity came to a maximum, and at about 7.45 three dense waves of German marines advanced against the front of 1,400 yards on which the 2nd King's Royal Rifles and 1st Northants lay between the sea and Lombartzyde. After a most bitter struggle the Germans succeeded in capturing the ground north of the river, though they were compelled to retire about 300 yards from its banks. A handful of the troops escaped though the German lines and swam across the Yser; but the bulk of the 1,200 men were killed or captured. It was merely a local success, though some critics seemed to imagine that it had forestalled a British offensive—a suggestion which is obviously ludicrous. Any offensive on this sector would have to be made on a much wider front to stand any chance of success. In actual fact, the manner of this defeat was of more value to the Allies than the loss of their bridgehead on so narrow a front. The small British force fought to the last man. Some officers were seen fighting their way back to a tunnel where the headquarters lay as the small incident ended; and in the hottest part a soldier had swum the river under heavy fire, in order to warn the adjacent sectors. Such was the episode which the Germans reported as though it were a decisive success. No doubt it relieved the nerves of the Germans on the coastal sector, for they had long expected attack, and knew not from which point it might come.

There was some activity on other parts of the British front to distract attention from the concentration in the north. The trenches on the crest of Infantry Hill, east of Monchy-le-Preux, were captured on 14th June, and a fortnight later the Canadians pushed their positions closer in about Lens. On 28th June Horne carried



out an elaborate series of demonstrations as though attacking on the twelve miles between Gavrelle and Hulluch. Attacks were actually carried out about Oppy and on the south of Lens, where the Canadians captured Leuvelte. The commander of the 6th German Army was now General Otto von Below, who first became acquainted with an area where he was to fight a critical battle in Ludendorff's great offensive. By the end of the month the Germans had been compelled to withdraw ninety-six divisions from the firing line on the Western front to refit.

It was a fortnight after the attack on the troops north of the Yser that one of the most tragic battles of the war began. The line of the Ypres salient was, as it had been in 1915, resting on the west of Hooge, passing through Wieltje, and crossing the Yser Canal about two and a half miles north of Ypres. Thence it followed the canal bank past Boesinghe to Dixmude. The line about Ypres itself lay little more than two miles from the town. To advance from this position meant to challenge the advantages of the ridge which runs through Passchendaele. It was not a high ridge. At its maximum it did not rise higher than 200 feet above sea level, but in the flat country it gave the only observation positions between Ypres and Bruges. Any concentration within the Ypres line must be made under the observation of numerous eyes from this ridge. And the line itself was one upon which two years of labour had been spent. The Germans had been driven by the Battle of the Somme to change their system of defence, but they were shrewd enough to profit by the high defensive qualities of this fortified line. The first object of the Allied armies in the Third Battle of Ypres was to drive the Germans from this commanding ridge; but since the ridge gave observation over the whole of the Flanders plain right up to Bruges, and since every additional advance must tend to turn the German positions on the Channel coast into a dangerous salient, the true purpose was the capture of this same valuable coastal strip, if possible with its garrison. We may go even further and suggest that the final object of the new battle was to drive the Germans out of Belgium. For we must be ruled by the analogy of the Battle of the Somme, which, striking only on a sector of some twenty-five miles' length, compelled an evacuation over a front of nearly 140 miles. At a certain stage of its development the new Battle of Ypres must, if continued successfully, not only compel the evacuation of the Channel coast, but also of Lille and the positions south as far as Laon. And unless the peril of the retreat were to be sustained for a long period, the only prudent plan would be to straighten the line drastically, and evacuate a considerable portion, if not the bulk, of Belgium.

Some such deductions were readily made from the possibilities of the situation. The strategy of the new offensive was at once approved, and seen by the discerning to be the most promising military idea which, apart from the ill-fated venture at the Dardanelles, had inspired the Allied councils. It was rooted in ground historic for the English, for it was here that Marlborough's campaigns were fought, and the strategic possibilities seemed to bear more immediately on the paramount need of the Allies to compel the evacuation of their territory. Coming upon the Battle of the Somme and with the recent memories of Messines, it was begun with high hopes. Even before the attack of the 10th July, the German reports had been eloquent of heavy British bombardments on the sector between the sea and the Lys. The British aeroplanes almost nightly added to this vast area of destruction by scattering their bombs over the Belgian bases and on the coastal batteries. At times, too, the huge new monitors appeared dimly out at sea, and directed a still

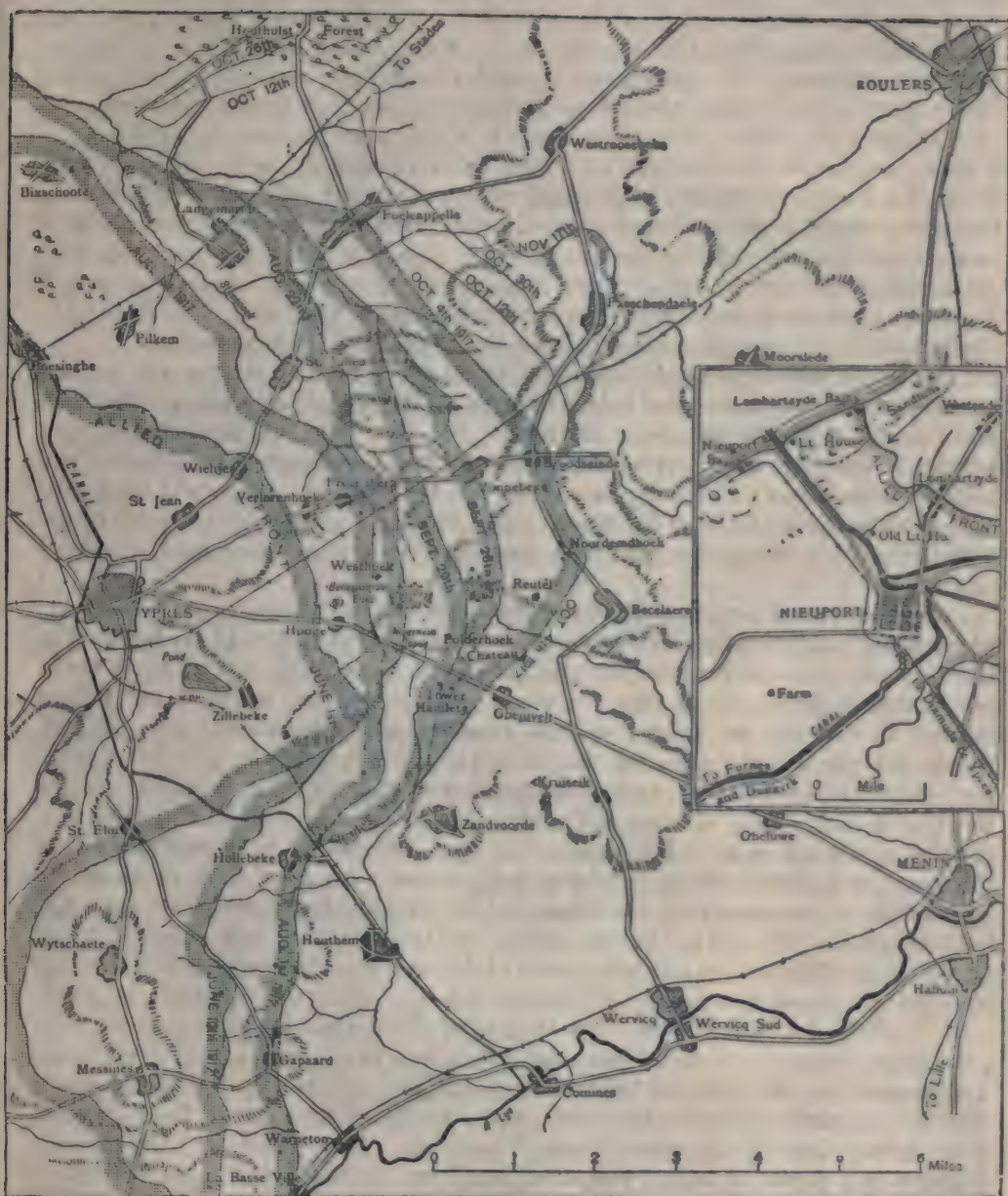
heavier rain of explosives on the coastal bases. The German Staff knew perfectly well that somewhere on this sector a great battle would spring forth. They must have discovered that the British had relieved the French near the coast, since their small success in the battle of the 10th gave them proof that Strickland's 1st Division lay there. On the following day they attempted to extend their successes, by repeated attacks against the exposed flank of Shute's 32nd Division south of Lombartzyde, but all to no purpose. The struggle lasted until the evening of the 11th; but although the troops fought under the disadvantage of being virtually outflanked, they held their ground despite heavy loss.

On 30th July the bombardment worked up to a pitch of extraordinary intensity. It must not be imagined that all the bombardment was on one side. It was more like a vast and terrible wrestle between two opposing masses of guns. But it is interesting to note that although the unrestricted submarine campaign, which was to bring England to her knees in two months, had actually been doing its worst for three times that period, the tonnage of shell used by the British was nearly twice as great as the extraordinary bombardment that had marked the Battle of the Somme. On the first day of the battle 23,000 tons of artillery ammunition was used, and the artillery personnel was over 80 per cent. of the infantry engaged.

The 5th Army had four corps in the line on a seven and a half miles front, and Morland's 10th Corps of Plumer's army co-operated on the southern flank. Cavan's 14th Corps attacked on the right of the French with the Guards Division and 38th Welsh Division, the 20th and 29th being in reserve. Farther south, on the St. Julien sector, Maxse's 17th Corps had the 51st Highland and the 39th Divisions in the line, with the 11th and 45th in reserve. Watt's 19th Corps lay beyond, with the 55th West Lancashire Territorial and 15th Scots Divisions in front, and the 35th and 14th in support. And on the south Jacob's 2nd Corps connected the 5th and 2nd Armies with the 8th Regular, 30th Lancashire, and 24th Divisions, the 25th and 18th being in support. On the German side Armin had 13 divisions in the line, and these included the famous 3rd Guards (with the "Cockchafers") and four Bavarian divisions.

At 3.50 in the morning the British and French infantry advanced on a front of some fifteen miles between La Basse Ville on the river Lys and Steenstraate (west of Bixschoote) on the river Yser. Let us first take the result of this furious battle from the enemy *communiqué*. "The assault," it ran, "has been repulsed after changeable, bitter fights on a large scale. The enemy, who attacked with superior forces many ranks deep, had to content himself with the possession of a crater position in our defensive zone." It is amusing to note in this report of the German Staff that the story it tells does not preserve consistency even in its few lines, since, if the attack were repulsed, how could it still be admitted that the assailants were in possession of a crater position in the German defensive zone? The actual fact is that on the whole of the front this extraordinary defensive line, which had been nursed to its tremendous strength by two years of patient labour and German experience, was swept away. The men had assembled in the darkness, and went over the first German positions with little trouble. In the second positions the Germans were in greater force, but on the whole the day's successes were notable. On the southern edge of the line, Morland's troops were only expected to make a small advance, and this they easily accomplished, the New Zealanders capturing the villages of La Basse Ville and the 41st Division Hollebeke. The troops on the





The Country between the Ypres Salient and the Roulers-Menin Line, showing the Progress of the Campaign.

right of this section had to move astride the Ypres-Menin road, across rising and wooded ground. In front of them were the villages of Hooze and Westhoek, and to the north Verlorenhoek and Frezenberg. All these positions were strongly fortified, and south of Hooze was also the Sanctuary Wood, which naturally lent itself to defensive purposes. The British encountered a most fierce resistance in this sector of the battle. In between these large centres were fortified farms and woods, and greater numbers of the small concrete forts which were nicknamed "pill-boxes," a name which gives no impression of their extraordinary strength. Only a direct hit from a six-inch or heavier shell could reduce a pill-box; though it is a striking thing that many of them were evacuated owing to the concussion of the blows of shells which did not destroy them. They were built of reinforced concrete, with entrances at the rear or leading into communication trenches. They were only a few feet above the ground, with slits for machine guns, and, with roofs frequently covered with turf, they were almost impossible to detect from aeroplanes.

The troops moved forward close to the cloud which marked the barrage, accompanied by numerous tanks; and before the evening all these villages, except Westhoek and Sanctuary Wood, had been captured. But the 30th Division suffered very heavily in their advance, despite the heroism of the Manchester "Pal" troops and 2nd Scots Fusiliers; and the regulars of the 8th Division, with their right flank held up, halted at the west end of Westhoek. The 15th and 55th Divisions, north of the Ypres-Roulers railway, after extremely hard fighting reached their final objectives on the left.

The troops next to the north had to reach the line of the small river Steenbeek, which flows in a generally north-westerly direction from St. Julien to St. Jean. The river lay about two miles from the original British trench line, and to reach it the two northern corps had to pass the small hummock which is called the Pilkem Ridge. Pilkem and St. Julien, with the crossings of the Steenbeek, were secured. On the extreme left of the line the Guards and the French troops on their left, finding the German forward defence system unoccupied on the 27th, had promptly crossed the Yser Canal. They at once fell under repeated counter-attacks in their new position north and east of Boesinghe; but they maintained their positions across the canal, and after building seventeen bridges under fire on the afternoon of the 30th brilliantly overcame all obstacles, and by evening had established a bridge-head across the Steenbeek. On the left of the British the French, who had taken over from the Belgians the five-mile sector of the line near Boesinghe, threw twenty-nine bridges across the canal, and advanced to the capture of Steenstraete, which comprised the day's objective. But they carried out their instructions with such precision and ease that General Anthoine determined to go beyond his original plans. The troops therefore continued their advance to Bixschoote, and the German positions about it for nearly two and a half miles, and established their line at the Kortekaar Inn, midway between Langemarck and Bixschoote. They penetrated the German defences to a depth of almost two miles, and beat off with ease a counter-attack made early in the afternoon.

Over the northern part of the battle-front the British seem to have made their way with comparative ease; but from St. Julien southwards the resistance was heavier, and near Westhoek it could not be overcome during the whole day, and the depth of the advance only amounted to a mile. Only the Guards, 38th, and 57th Divisions had taken their full objectives, and on the right of Gough's army



only the first objectives had been seized. But the day's success, though incomplete, was important. Manning the defensive positions against the British and French were some of the Kaiser's finest troops. The "Cockchafers," the most famous regiment of the 3rd Guards Division, was almost annihilated by the Welsh, and as a result of the fighting 700 prisoners were taken. In all, the British captured over 6,100 prisoners and 25 guns; and, except at Westhoek, they had already secured the whole of the crest of the ridge and cut off the Germans from observation of the Ypres plain.

The almost invariable bad luck which attended the British battles did not desert them on this occasion. It is obvious that to be successful large attacks must be planned to the last detail, and hence the date selected for a battle must be fixed some days before. The date of the opening of the battle had been changed several times already, owing to the desire to assist the French, and also because the Germans were found to be moving their guns. But the season was drawing in, and at length it was decided that the first attack should be made on the 31st. The night of 30th July was rainy, and the morning of the battle was dull and overcast with clouds. In the afternoon rain began to fall heavily. The intolerable weather did not completely check the British airmen, who in the early part of the battle flew near the ground and fired on the German troops; but observation as the day wore on became almost impossible, and the sodden ground made the movement of artillery and transport a matter of great difficulty. The new German method of defence, which accepted the loss of the advanced positions and depended for its success upon instantaneous and strong counter-attacks, was in a superior position in this respect, since the guns had been withdrawn and were on their positions for counter-shelling.

The first counter-attacks were made against La Basse Ville, near the Lys and north of the Ypres-Comines Canal. But the heaviest counter-attacks were directed against the new positions between Westhoek and St. Julien. The fighting was almost continuous throughout the night; and when morning broke, St. Julien had been recaptured and the British had been forced back from the western fringes of Westhoek. All the day the heavy rain continued, but it did not prevent the Germans making still another attack on the front between Westhoek and St. Julien. The Ypres-Roulers railway cut through this sector, and it was astride this line that the Germans directed their counter-attack. They succeeded in recapturing part of the ground, but as evening fell the British recoiled and re-established themselves. The brunt of this attack was borne by the 15th (Scots) Division and the 55th West Lancashire Territorials, who suffered so heavily that they were replaced by the 36th (Ulster) and 16th Irish Divisions.

Sir Douglas Haig's plan was to complete the capture of the German defensive system in a series of leaps, and a further advance had been arranged for 1st August. Some of the divisions had suffered heavily in the first day's encounter; but all were capable of continuing the battle, and there were in immediate reserve as many divisions as had taken the field on 31st July. Everything depended upon keeping up the pressure when once the defence had begun to suffer disorganisation. It must be said that there was little evidence of the competent staff work in Gough's army which ensures success and controls the casualties. The loss of St. Julien was almost certainly due to the 39th Division venturing beyond their objectives on the afternoon of the 31st, and the attack on the crest of the ridge showed some confusion. But unless the defence could be kept fluid the battle must sink to trifling

advances, in which carefully arranged positions would always lie in front of the advance. The rain which flooded the Ypres area was the worst possible enemy of the Allies. "The low-lying clayey soil, torn by shell and sodden with rain, turned to a succession of vast muddy pools. The valleys of the choked and over-flowing streams were speedily transformed into large stretches of bog, impassable except by a few well-defined tracks, which became marks for the enemy's artillery. To leave these tracks was to risk death by drowning, and in the course of the subsequent fighting, on several occasions both men and pack animals were lost in this way. In these conditions operations of any magnitude became impossible.\* While the Allies were thus compelled to wait, the Germans had time to recover, reorganise their defence, and profit by the exposure of the British troops. Lying out in the open, in shell-holes and puddles, the men's lot was indescribable; and when we judge the small results achieved by this costly campaign, we must remember these terrible, unwilling truces which the weather imposed on the Allied command.

During the next fortnight the battle degenerated into small attacks and vigorous counter-thrusts. Almost every day the rainy and stormy weather continued, but it did not prevent the Germans from testing every mile of the conquered ground, and frequently their first assault gained at least part of its objective. On 3rd August St. Julien was occupied by the 39th Division with little difficulty, after a preliminary bombardment; but the division had suffered so terribly that it was not only removed from the line but from the corps. Two days later the Germans made a violent attack on the new positions at Westhoek, but secured no success. On the other hand, the early morning of 10th August saw the recapture of Westhoek by the 2nd Irish Rifles (25th Division), and the occupation of the whole of the ridge on a front of two miles south of the Ypres-Roulers railway. On the same day the British established themselves in the south-eastern fringes of Glencorse Wood, but suffered heavily from the enfilade fire from Inverness Copse. The advance called forth a violent German reaction, and for three days the battle raged over various parts of the front; but on the evening of the 12th the British had 484 prisoners and six guns in their hands as a result of the fighting. These were in addition to the 6,000 prisoners captured as a result of the first day's fighting.

It needs no great skill and insight to see that the new battles on the Ypres front were beginning to create a centre of suction on the Western front, as the Somme had done the year before. In order to prevent the Germans withdrawing troops from other parts of the line except at their peril, Sir Douglas Haig opened a diversion in the neighbourhood of Lens. Again it was the German *communiqué* which at first drew attention to the preliminary bombardment. After the Battle of Arras the British line had been carried into the south-western suburbs of Lens, and it had later been pressed close to the north-western approach of the city. And it was to develop this threat to an important railway centre and base in Flanders that the Canadians directed their bombardment. The main attack was directed towards the northern boundaries of the city, where stood the famous Hill 70, so gallantly carried in September 1915 by the 15th Scots (New Army) Division, who could not, however, maintain it. The 15th August opened wet and stormy, and it was in such weather that the Canadians went forward at 4.25 A.M., after a most careful rehearsal of the whole of the attack. Hill 70, since the occasion of its former capture, had been strengthened and fortified to the full extent of engineering skill; yet

\* Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch.



the hill was carried with very little difficulty, and such also was the fate of the villages of Cité St. Elizabeth, Cité St. Emile, and Cité St. Laurent. The advance found very little resistance in the speedy capture of these important positions; and though ten desperate counter-attacks were made, they were ill-led, and added to the German casualties. Some of these attacks seemed to the Canadians almost like sport; they were so ill-judged and so handicapped against success. On at least two occasions the German troops were seen marching massed in column of route, and were caught in that formation by the British shrapnel. Almost all the attacks were thoroughly shaken and terribly thinned down before they approached within bombing distance of the Canadian positions, where they were met with a cool and well-directed fire from the rifles and machine guns.

Only on one occasion was the attack driven home sufficiently to force the Canadian line back; and then the positions were promptly restored by the Canadians. The net result of the three days' fighting was to place the Germans in a dangerously narrow salient at Lens, and to break up a considerable number of German divisions. The Germans lost 1,120 prisoners, and were left to hold a position with which every means of communication was now under the Allied guns, directed by careful and competent observation.

**Second Attack.**—But the Battle of Ypres had sprung to life again. At 4.25 of the morning of the 16th, Sir Douglas Haig struck on a nine-mile front north of the Inverness Copse, near the Ypres-Menin road, the objective being the centre of the Langemarck-Gheluvelt, the third German line. The fighting on this occasion was most severe, standing out in marked contrast to that which had taken place in the first advance on 31st July, and in the capture of Hill 70. The German Staff had by this time made up their minds as to the critical importance of stemming the advance, and their defensive showed, as usual, a high level of ability. They knew that they could not hold with infallible success the whole of the front on which the British were striking. They therefore devoted themselves to maintaining with all their force the southern flank where the ridges converged on the little peak known as "Clapham Junction," on the Ypres-Menin road. In the terrific fighting which raged in this and during the next two months, nowhere was the struggle so bitter as on the little stretch of ground crossed by the Ypres-Menin road. South of St. Julien the advance of the 16th August was measured by feet. The 56th Division, on the extreme right, got through Glencorse Wood; but were driven out again, and the 8th Division, on their left, were involved in their failure. And the two Irish divisions pitted their heroism in vain against the skilful defence.

On the left flank of the attack the troops were more successful, and the 20th Light Division were able to capture the village of Langemarck, and they established themselves at the end of the day in the German trench system about half a mile east of the village. The 18th Corps on their right, and the 29th Division on their left, co-operated in the successful advance. The French on the left of the 29th Division reached the Steenbeek, east of Bixchoote, and captured the peninsula which lies between the Yser Canal and the Marte Vaart, with the bridgehead of Drie Grachten.

At the end of the day 2,114 prisoners had been left in Gough's hands, with twenty-four guns of heavy and light calibre. The ground was almost impassable. In the neighbourhood of Langemarck it had been turned into a morass by the heavy and long-continued rains. The men literally waded through mud. The worst

difficulty of the troops on the left and centre of the British advance was the nature of the ground over which they had to advance. But the pill-box defensive system triumphantly justified itself on this day.

The resistance had perceptibly stiffened since the battle of 31st July, and the losses of the British troops had been out of all proportion to the successes achieved. Yet the German *communiqué* describing the battle reported that Langemarck had been recaptured, although they had not even attempted to counter-attack to that end. It stated that the battle had extended to the Lys, whereas its southern flank was certainly the Ypres-Menin road. It is not too much to deduce from these facts the German recognition of the Allied power; for, under cooler circumstances, they might have been content with having proposed a most formidable problem for the Allies' solution. We now know that it was this battle which first pointed the anxiety of the British command at the new German system of defensive areas, and the next formidable battle did not take place until seven weeks of careful thought and preparation had been given to the crucial problem.

It is necessary that we should grasp the German intention as to the military situation. The German Staff, in spite of all their boasts, had been proved wrong as to the impregnability of defensive lines; and, to do them justice, they recognised it. They had thought that the lines could be held against any possible assault, and that after some costly attempts the Allies would recognise the situation and ask for terms. They now took up exactly the same attitude with regard to their new defensive. No longer were lines held to be impregnable; but it was thought that fortified areas would do what the lines had failed to do. The new system was to risk the loss of the small number of men left behind in the front positions, and to dot areas with small formidable works sufficient to hold a considerable number of men. The Allies were to lose heavily in crossing such zones; and when, after heavy losses, they had advanced, they were to be immediately counter-attacked in force. The bulk of the German troops were to be kept far from the front, and while it was realised that the Allies might make small gains at considerable cost, it was not thought possible that they would be considered sufficient compensation for the casualties incurred. Viewed from the present standpoint, there seems to be some tinge of gambling about this attitude; but it must be remembered that even the saner minds of Germany were still apt to be intrigued with theoretical demonstrations, and the submarine campaign seemed, in principle, to offer that immediate victory that was so ardently desired by the Germans. Hence the Staff did not regard themselves as committed to an indefinite war, but only to a defensive of limited extent.

Like so many of the German plans, it had in it elements which were formidable enough. The small concrete forts were so strong that, as we have seen, only a direct hit from one of the heaviest shells would knock them out. Strangely enough, the pounding they received from smaller shell proved sufficient often to force the garrison to capitulate. The hail of gas shells and the cylinders of boiling oil were also of great assistance in reducing them; for they threatened to act as traps, and men confronted with the terrors of suffocation will always fly to the open. The tanks, too, played their important part, and the whole staging of the next attack was worked out in the utmost detail. But for the moment the defensive was again in the ascendant, and there was too little intelligence shown by the Allied command in coping with it. The long intervals between the attacks, while it ensured their



success, robbed them of the only strategical bearing which could have justified them.

Local attacks were delivered in the neighbourhood of St. Julien on the 19th, 22nd, and 27th August by the 11th and 48th Divisions, who in the aggregate advanced two miles of their front to a depth of half a mile. On the 22nd the 14th Division bit into Glencorse Wood and Inverness Copse. Despite repeated attacks, the 5th Shropshires and 6th Cornwalls held their gains in the wood; but the 6th Somersets and 10th Durhams were forced back to the western edge of Inverness Copse two days later. There were also local attacks about Lens on 21st and 26th August and 11th September. But these small advances served only to throw into higher relief the stagnation on the area where alone the Allied plans had contemplated a decisive victory.

**The Third Attack.**—For almost seven weeks there had been a cessation from major operations, when, on 20th September, the troops again went forward. The delay was conditioned by the necessity for allowing the ground time to recover from one of the wettest months of August known, and it had been filled with preparation. Sir Douglas Haig had seen that his offensive in this area resolved itself into two very different projects—a small advance across the source of the Passchendaele Ridge astride the Ypres-Menin road, and a more extensive but easier advance farther north. If the first project were to be realised without overwhelming losses, it must be attempted with ample preparation and the most careful Staff work. Plumer's front was therefore extended to cover this shallow belt of high ground with its skeleton woods, and for the attack he employed six divisions, including the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions. Gough's army also used six divisions, the front of his attack extending from beyond Langemarck to the neighbourhood of Zonnebeke. The guns had been roaring and shrieking for weeks. The attack began at 5.40 A.M., in the misty aftermath of a rainy night. A minute or two before the assault, the Germans apparently saw the troops assembling, and sent up a brilliant red flare. But it was too late. The troops assembled in perfect order despite the heavy rain and mist, and when the battle was joined the strong positions across the Menin road were carried with great speed. The extent of the battle line was some eight miles between the Ypres-Comines Canal and the Ypres-Staden railway. The objectives were nowhere over a mile from the starting-point, and for the most part they were only 1,000 yards; and, with the small exception of a few hundred yards at Tower Hamlets, all the objectives were carried. They included the highest part of the little knoll across which the Ypres-Menin road runs. It is the culmination of the ridge which runs through Passchendaele to the Forest of Houthulst. The battle was over at noon, and, as the Germans preferred to describe it, "had already been brought to a standstill by noon."

On the whole the attack was a great success.\* The objectives were gained without undue cost, and some 3,000 to 4,000 prisoners were taken.

The 19th and 39th Divisions, on the extreme south, had but a short distance to go, as the flank corps, and they early achieved their objectives. The fine English battalions of the 41st Division crossed the course of the Basseville Beek and stormed the slopes of the Tower Hamlets spur, just south of the Menin road, but could not secure the flat crest. The worst part of the advance was conducted by Yorkshire

\* "The enemy's onslaught on the 20th was successful, which proved the superiority of the attack over the defence." [Ludendorff, *My Memories*, p. 488.]

and North Country troops (23rd Division) and Australians. The Yorkshires and Northumberland Fusiliers went through Inverness Copse (which had proved before so terrible an obstacle), crossed the Basseville Beek, and the 12th Durhams and 10th West Ridings carried the advancing wave over the Veldhoek Ridge. It was the splendid rush of these troops which covered the left flank of the 41st Division and the Australians' right as they went through Glencorse Wood and the Nuns' Wood. Before noon the Australians were in the west of Polygon Wood and in the old German third line. Three fortified farms to the north were taken by South African troops, and West Lancashires had to reduce two strong points on their left. The village of Zevenkote, farther north, was captured, with numerous strong positions, by the South African and Highland troops of the 9th Division. The four northern divisions, the 58th (Lancashire Territorials, with Freyberg, the hero of the Ancre battle among its brigadiers), the immortal 51st, the 20th, and the Guards, all carried out their part in the battle with speed and precision.

The weather cleared during the day, and the aeroplanes were able to take part in the battle. It was through this fact that the first German counter-attacks were broken with such ease. The outstanding feature of the battle was obviously the high level of tactics. The men moved behind the barrage with coolness and precision. There was no hesitation, no wavering, even by the North Country troops, who had to thread their way through the swampy fringes of the Basseville Beek and then confront pill-boxes in rows and intricate patterns. The Londoners, who had to take Turret Farm, gave another example of coolness and discipline. This heavily-fortified work, which lay on a spur cutting the line of advance at an angle, could only have been taken at a heavy cost. But the troops avoided a frontal attack, threw their left flank forward, and then turned along the ridge, taking the work on its right and rear. It was a brilliant little manoeuvre, and to have carried it out in the storm and stress of modern battle speaks highly for the discipline and address of the troops. Tanks were used but sparingly in this battle, and two of them were on the front of the Londoners' attack, and gave considerable help. But the North Country troops had the pleasure of recapturing a British tank which had wandered away six weeks before, and, getting stuck in the swampy ground, was captured. When it was taken it had had a treatment of concrete applied, and was acting as a fort. But, with its garrison of thirty men, it was compelled to surrender. The total number of prisoners taken was 3,243, and several guns were captured.

The detail of this battle will not suffice to explain the odd feeling of victory which it conveyed to the British. The soldiers who took part in it were gay and confident, quite unimpressed with the pill-boxes, which they treated with contempt. But this is the normal mood of the British soldier. When a man slides over the roof of a pill-box, hoping thereby to arrive more expeditiously at the back entrance, we smile, and think he deserved the wound he received. Or when another soldier puts his hand through a pill-box embrasure to deliver a bomb and has some fingers cut off, we reflect that this is the way of the men. But there can be no doubt that the battle had a different atmosphere.

The explanation of this we may find in the fact that 31st July did not really involve the Allies in the new German defensive. The battle of 16th August did, and they were unable to cope with it. On 20th September, however, Haig attacked the problem frontally, so to say. There could be no question about having come





really to grips with it; and the British losses were comparatively light. Furthermore, although the objectives were limited, and the troops advanced nowhere more than a mile, there was such clear confusion on the German side that General von Armin, the German commander, did not know where the troops stood, what was still intact, and what had been given up. A dispatch carried by a dog, which must have been driven half wild in the battle, fell into the hands of the Allies. It conveyed an order of Armin that the "high ground towards Molenaarelsthoeck must be recaptured at all costs." As the troops were never within less than a mile and a half of this place, we can only conclude that the German troops there were in such disorder that the garrison had withdrawn. If the success could be imitated, the Germans would ultimately be driven from Flanders as they had been driven from Bapaume. The whole question of the moment was, had the new tactics been evolved too late?

The days which followed were filled with German counter-attacks, made with a vigour and resolution which told unambiguously how valuable were the positions already gained, and how little the enemy liked the possibility of an extension of them. On the other hand, Sir Douglas Haig's plan clearly was to follow up ruthlessly all weakening in the enemy. Provided the defensive in depth could be broken, the sooner each fresh attack was staged the better. Reorganisation, which was necessary on both sides, would be prevented by the delivery of rapid assaults which would preclude the initiation of any new system of defence. And yet the pill-box tactics were formidable enough. The field of fire of one covered the distance to the next, and dense wire or pitfalls were sown between. Snipers' posts of thick Krupp steel to hold one or two men were dotted about where the cover seemed good. What method offered success against such a defence? Yet the troops clearly had beaten it once, and were confident they could beat it again. One favourite method of dealing with these posts was to bring up light trench mortars, and, under cover of a brisk bombardment, send men to the rear to bomb the garrison out.

On 26th September the next move was made on a somewhat shorter front. The line of advance stretched the six miles or so from the north-east of St. Julien to the south of Tower Hamlets, a huddled handful of houses below the Ypres-Menin road. Again the success was marked. With but one small exception, all the objectives were achieved. The Germans were in no doubt as to the approaching resumption of the offensive, and on the 25th they spent the whole day delivering heavy counter-attacks in the hope of forestalling it. At night they bombarded heavily with high-explosive and gas shells. In some of these counter-attacks they temporarily gained a little ground. In the neighbourhood of the Menin road the gain was a little more permanent, and a small body of men, refusing to give ground, were cut off and taken prisoner.

In a sense the fighting had never ceased since the attack of 20th September. In the rhythm of the modern battle, the attack only ebbs back to rest after a few days, and on this occasion the Germans had taken every means of keeping the struggle going in order to ward off another of the smashing blows which they feared. Yet it was in vain. A little before six o'clock, despite all these attempts, the new assault was delivered as arranged. The night was highly strained. It was heavy and misty, and it was in the dark and the still hanging mist that the men went forward, after a short but terribly intense bombardment, behind their barrage. Little resist-



ance was encountered by the 11th Division, which advanced about 1,000 yards up the St. Julien-Poelcapelle road ; and the 58th London Territorials fought their way to the bulk of their objectives, with the 59th Division of North Midland Territorials. The 3rd Division, farther south, made a spirited advance, and captured its final objective, the village of Zonnebeke. Like all the villages within range, a huddle of ruins, Zonnebeke did not offer much resistance. It lay on the western slopes of the ridge—a pinkish drab patch—which was useful solely as a shelter and cover for a number of concrete gun emplacements. Yet these seem to have caused but slight trouble, and 150 prisoners were easily collected.

In Polygon Wood the 5th Australian Division made fine headway, and established themselves very early on the trench line east of the racecourse which marked their day's objective. But their position was not secure, and was, indeed, unenviable owing to the weakness of their right flank. Here the English and Scottish troops of the 33rd Division had met with a fierce resistance. Just before the attack the Germans laid a barrage against the left flank of the division ; but they carried the line forward, and attained their objectives, without being able to hold them, and the Australians had to send help to them in their own interest. The 39th Division, farther south, lying across the Menin road, had the hardest fighting of the day, and they had not completed the capture of Tower Hamlets spur until the evening of the 27th. Some 1,600 prisoners were taken, but the losses had been very heavy on the southern part of the front.

It was hardly half-past eight in the morning when the fighting was practically over on most parts of the front, where the territory to be gained did not amount to more than 1,000 yards. The counter-attacks began almost at once, and they were generally made by specially selected shock troops. Between 4 P.M. and 7 P.M. seven determined assaults were made ; but they were in vain. Where they were not broken by artillery fire they came to grief against the cool rifle and machine-gun fire of the victorious troops. The Germans assaulted below Passchendaele, to which place the troops were brought by omnibuses from adjacent sectors of the line. They were conveyed under shell fire, formed up under shell fire, and ran into a terrible barrage. Their losses must have been heavy. The Australian victory in Polygon Wood was the cleanest and most efficient performance of the day. To the south, where they were able to assist the sorely-tried English and Scottish troops, the position was more difficult. This sector of the line had been under the heaviest pressure since the 23rd. The Germans had been attempting to hold up the general advance by driving a small wedge into the line here, and on the day before the attack they had forced the troops to give ground for about an eighth of a mile. Two companies of 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were cut off in this partial retirement ; but when the order for advance came, their comrades went forward once more, and found the men still gallantly holding out. It was not the first occasion that small bodies had been cut off and had refused to give in ; but the Germans seemed on the whole glad of the excuse for abandoning their positions and surrendering. The Highlanders were rescued by the Australians, though it was English, Scottish, and Welsh battalions which had made the advance on the sector south of Polygon Wood.

Each of these successes carried the British troops forward nearer to that Passchendaele Ridge which meant to the side not holding it a certain relief in man power for the maintenance of the positions, and better conditions of life for winter. The

latest advance gave the British possession of the Gheluvelt spur, all but its eastern extremity, and carried the line to the slopes of the main ridge at Zonnebeke. The English troops which took the position of Tower Hamlets secured a position from which they could watch the movements on the little isolated knoll upon which rested Zandvoorde.

The impression of this prolonged Battle of Ypres was that of an action under a microscope. The Germans had all the advantage in their reports. Quite rightly they could say only a few thousand yards had been gained; quite reasonably they could compare it with the solid and convincing war map. It was but a few square miles of broken ground. The unfortunate feature of this battle was that in its progress the heart of the German contention tended to gather justification. What could justify the exposure of these brave young fellows to such hazards of life or limb, short of the chance of a clear victory? A few yards of broken ground, the infliction of perhaps the same number of casualties on the enemy—these were cold comfort. And there seemed to be no sign of that quickening of pace in the advance which alone could offer the possibility of achieving a decisive success.

## VII. VERDUN ONCE MORE.

Two names will live in the memory with a unique appeal of carnage and courage, of pathos and pride, of terror and triumph. One of these is Ypres, with its storied ruins; the other is Verdun. No other places in the world-wide sweep of the war call so surely upon the emotions, and if the spirit of France glows in the Meuse fortress, that of Britain gleams as brightly in this old-world Belgian town.

No nation suffered in the war so terribly as France, and after the Second Battle of the Aisne, Pétain had to nurse his wearied armies back to their normal confidence, which had been so rudely shaken by hopes misplaced. With skilful caution he had already achieved this purpose to some extent in the aftermath of the Aisne battles; but he had planned a stroke which would sweep away all relics of that searching episode. His sure instinct selected Verdun for this *pièce justificatif*. In the summer of 1917 Guillaumat, who had so ably led the 1st Corps in the Battle of the Somme, was in command of the 2nd Army. The German 5th Army, which lay about the Verdun area, was commanded by General von Gallwitz, who had won distinction against Russia in 1915, and later against Serbia. To Guillaumat was entrusted the restoration of the French positions to their site at the opening of the Crown Prince's attack. In June they lay unstably round the curve of the Meuse and below the high ground on the west of the river.

Gallwitz was a skilful soldier, and he saw his chance of throwing the French back upon their final defences west of the Meuse by the capture of the small sector of the front which crossed the Esnes-Malancourt road. If he could drive in a wedge there, he might get the leverage to push the defenders off the lost slopes of the famous Hill 304, and by continuing his pressure towards the east he might force the French back from the loop of the Meuse. On 28th June he struck against this position, after a heavy bombardment, and drove home his wedge despite the heroic resistance on each side of Hill 304. For a whole week he strove to make good his new positions, and to exercise his leverage from them. But in two swift and skilful actions,



on 7th and 17th July, the French recoiled, and the original positions were restored. For a month the Verdun sector returned to its uneasy rest, and then, on 17th August, Gallwitz, in full expectation of an attack, made a reconnaissance in force at Bezonvaux. He secured a momentary gain, but the two following days saw the line restored, and on 20th August Guillaumat began his great attack.

For nine days the French guns had been beating the German positions to dust, and the nightly air raids sought out billets and railheads. The approach of an attack was thus well advertised ; but when, in the dark of the morning, the French infantry moved out, the magnitude of the plan gained all the advantages of surprise. Guillaumat had wisely determined to attack over the whole eleven-mile front between Avocourt and Bezonvaux. Almost at a bound Avocourt Wood, Dead Man Hill, Cumières Wood, with Crow's Wood beyond, Talou Hill (in the bend of the river), Hill 344, and parts of Fosses and Chaume Wood were captured. Gallwitz, bartering speed for precision, counter-attacked wildly and without effect. He had been holding his forward positions lightly, in the manner of the hour, and he only lost 4,000 prisoners. But the French impetus was not yet spent. On the 21st Goose's Crest, Regnéville, and Samogneux were seized, and the centre was firmly established. On Friday, despite the violent resistance, Hill 304 and Camard Wood fell, and the French reached the line of the Forges brook beyond. On the next three days the gains were rounded off east and west of the Meuse, and the toll of prisoners had risen to over 10,000, with about thirty guns. In a short week the French positions had been fundamentally changed.

Ten days later the salient north-west of Bezonvaux was straightened by the capture of Chaume Wood, and there were tactical gains east and west of Beaumont. Verdun could now rest secure. Guillaumat had brilliantly secured the bulk of his objectives, and further readjustments could be made by local attacks. This was not the least conspicuous battle of a splendid series, and its moral effect was considerable. Its military purpose was to immobilise in this area German troops who might otherwise have found their way to Armin's army which confronted Haig.

## VIII. THE AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLUTION.

THE Russian Revolution was one of the great events of the world's history, and its repercussion was widespread. Some influence it had upon the war immediately. Any reluctance the great democracy of America may have felt to ally itself to the Entente Powers because one of them was autocratic and tyrannical was swept aside with the overturning of the Russian Government ; and the Allies gained politically by the solidarity of their stand for democracy and freedom. Even in Germany the Russian Revolution had its effect ; and it became the parent of that more articulate and determined Socialism which later in the year began to insist upon having a voice in the government. Germany, moreover, lost the advantage of the claim to be fighting against an effete and repressive tyranny. Indeed, it soon became clear that the Russian Revolution was to be directed by a number of men who not only did not belong to the systems of yesterday, but even belonged to those of perhaps centuries hence. These were men with a vast faith in mankind. They held that the effect of the Russian Revolution could not be expected in Germany during the war, since all the men were at the front, under a discipline which prevented

the assertion of independence. That was one of the reasons why they wished for peace—peace to end war for ever, not by the conquest of the power which had declared the war and believed in it, but by allowing the ideas raised by the Russian Revolution to circulate and bear fruit.

Men who took this standpoint naturally wished for peace with all their might. All would have been well if they had let the army alone. The world was certain to gain from a "peace offensive" with the programme "no annexations and no indemnities," if at the same time no opportunity were given to the Germans to believe themselves independent of such a programme. Pacifist thought tended to hold that the Allies should not fight for a crushing military victory, since that would stimulate them to impose unjust peace terms, and thus to arouse revenge. But the very men who held this point of view—and the Russian Soviets did almost entirely—seemed to ignore the fact that the Germanic Powers held a great amount of Allied territory, and showed no eagerness to abandon it. If the Allies triumphant, with their former objection to war, would have been a danger to the peace of the world, how much more would Germany and her Ally be with a past and convinced belief in the dignity and profits of war. A clear and logical thinker could hardly fail to infer that if the future and stable peace of the world would be prejudiced by an Allied victory, it would be fatally undermined by a German victory, and that the wisest peace policy for the time being was to concentrate on war.

Such was not the point of view of the Petrograd Workmen's and Soldiers' Council (*Soviet*), and of the most articulate of the revolutionaries. The moderates had made the Revolution with the assistance of the army; but the extremists took advantage of it to unmake the army which had given them freedom. As the spring of 1917 dragged on from the Great Retreat on the Western front to the Battle of Arras, the Battle of the Aisne, and the Battle of Messines Ridge, it became evident that the Revolution had made a crucial difference to the march of military events. The spring and summer of 1917 were to have ended the war. Sir Douglas Haig had said in February that he would break the German line "in many places." But the battles of Arras and Messines, successful in their own way, did not break the line, and did not aim at such an objective. The Allied plans had been made on the assumption that Russia would assist by an early and continued offensive. Instead of this, reports came to the Western Powers which seemed to show that offensive action was the last possibility on the Eastern front. Discipline became hopelessly relaxed, and fraternisation with the enemy reached great lengths.

The Tsar abdicated on 15th March. Before the end of that month the men had abandoned the salute, and betaken themselves to the discussion of strategy and policy. The famous Order No. 1 called upon soldiers to seize their arms, and to assume complete control of their regiments. On 22nd March the death penalty was abolished, both for civil and military courts. In Petrograd "war aims" were the theme of repeated debates in the Soviet, the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council; and the soldiers at the front felt that they, too, should participate in the discussion. The Soviet informed General Korniloff, at that time Commander-in-Chief at Petrograd, that they were the Government, and had therefore no need to consult Gutchkoff, the Minister of War. Almost from the first the bulk of the Soviet regarded their Allies, England and France, as imperialist and capitalist, like Germany, although the majority of the Soviet and the Provisional Government decided that plain policy suggested their adherence to the cause of the Allies.



The mass of the Russian army was ignorant, and could not grasp the reason for carrying on the war after they had been told of their newly gained freedom. To fight was to risk death, and freedom was of no value to a dead man. Under such a stimulus, the men began to trickle away from their units, and to wander back to their homes. The land was to be distributed, and they wanted their share. Those who stayed at the front fraternised with the Germans and Austrians. This was much more mischievous than the looting and desertion of other soldiers. It amounted to a species of madness. Germans were seen to be busily sketching and photographing the Russian defences, and when some of the more disciplined Russians tried to stop them, they were set upon by their own comrades. The Germans openly readjusted their positions as a result of the experience gained, and when some of the Russian artillery fired upon them they were attacked by their own infantry with bayonets. German and Austrian envoys would frequently cross over and inspect the Russian lines, and the Russians were simple enough to believe in their good faith. The Germans and Austrians infected the Russians wherever they went with the idea that they were ready to conclude peace, and that the British alone prevented the end of the war. Photographs of the Tsar and King George were published side by side, with a legend stating that they were brothers in blood and imperialism, and that, now that the Tsar's tyranny had gone, only King George and the English prevented peace. Peace was actually concluded between a Russian and a German regiment! The German Staff made the most of any line of argument which promised to influence the Russian soldiery. In the midst of this demoralisation the division of authority came to make matters worse. The soldiers were now to rule, and they chose their own officers, but without any pledge to obey them when selected. There were also local committees of the workmen's and soldiers' delegates which claimed to exercise some sort of delegated power from the Central Soviet at Petrograd.

The Provisional Government, through the War Minister, also represented some authority. But the net result of these various authorities was that a complete anarchy reigned throughout the bulk of the army. One battalion arrested its colonel because, without consent of the local committee, he had ordered it to go to the front. On one occasion the colonel of a regiment was arrested by the local Soviet, but was released by the regiment, who thereupon arrested the Council. Superior officers had frequently to convince their juniors of the feasibility of the commands they issued. Regiments made terms as to their obedience, and of a unit frequently two regiments would refuse outright, one might consent on terms, and one consent without conditions. The resultant effect was pure anarchy. The soldiers even attacked the delegates of the Central Committee of the C.W.S.D. who visited them. Obedience and loyalty were completely in abeyance. The men elected representatives, and then refused to obey them. They would not go to the front, or would not leave it. They held interminable discussions, after the manner of true Russians. They would not attack the Germans, but would attack their own kith and kin, or the Red Cross delegates of Britain. In two months the army was practically a mob, and the result was viewed with apprehension not only by the generals and the Provisional Government, but even by the Petrograd Soviet. An elaborate charter of rights of the soldier had been drawn up, and M. Kerensky, who succeeded M. Gutchkoff as Minister of War, put it into force. It ensured freedom of association, political and religious, to all soldiers, and freedom

of expression for all views when off duty. This clause, it was speedily apparent, did not cover the generals, and the paradox held that practically the only people without rights were commanding officers. The privates were "the people," but the officers were not. The most vexed clause of the declaration of rights was that (14) which empowered a commander even to use "armed force" against any one disobeying his orders in face of the enemy. This clause was for long the battleground of opposed factions.

Gutchkoff submitted the draft of the rights of military men to the chief commanders. Under pressure of the Petrograd Soviet, the Provisional Government proposed to publish it without waiting for the generals' views. It was on this proposition that Gutchkoff resigned, and the commanders-in-chief visited Petrograd on 16th May to state their views to the Provisional Government and the Soviet.

General Alexeieff, the Commander-in-Chief when the Revolution occurred, had seen with dismay the army disintegrate, and he spoke very directly to his audience about the duties of the soldier and the necessity for the members of the Soviet to repair the mischief they had done. This was sufficient. He had to go. The freedom which the charter of rights ensured to his soldiers did not extend to him, and he was dismissed by the Provisional Government, at the suggestion of the Soviet, as lacking the "energy, enthusiasm, and confidence" necessary. He was succeeded by General Brussiloff (5th June), and this brilliant commander concerted plans for rescuing his country from disaster. Prince Leopold had initiated a formal movement to obtain a separate peace with Russia, sending German officers to General Dragomiroff, Ruszky's successor as commander of the northern front. But even the Soviet contemptuously repudiated any such bargain, stating that they knew "that the crushing of the Allies would be the beginning of the crushing of her own armies," and referred to the "bloody battles on the Anglo-French front." This, indeed, was the crux of the whole question. The Allies, who had felt themselves assured of success this year, saw themselves confronted by a position in which the Germans were able to withdraw guns from the Eastern front and divert all their reserves and drafts of returned wounded to the Western front. Despite their most heroic attempts, their hope of breaking through against an ample reserve on the German side and a full provision of guns had become extremely slight. By about the end of June thirty German divisions had been withdrawn from the Eastern front for service in the West. The people of England and France saw themselves faced with an apparently indefinite extension of the war when they had hoped to see the approaching end. Even the accession of America could help little immediately, except financially and economically.

The best hope alike of the Revolution and of the Allied cause was a new Russian victory such as had marked the previous year. From the political point of view, such a victory might prove the saving of the situation. Military success might swamp the ultra-pacifist elements in the army and re-establish its unity. Influenced largely by these considerations, as well as by the military position, the Russian command began what promised to be a vigorous and triumphant offensive at the beginning of July. There is perhaps, in the light of events, an ominous undertone in the appealing proclamation issued by General Brussiloff at the opening of the offensive. It ran :—

" Since you could fight bravely, and beat the enemy for the old order with the



threat of being shot hanging over you, surely you will not now show any hesitation or doubt in the defence of our freedom and the exaltation of our great Revolution. Surely you do not wish to lend colour to the shameful statements of the enemy, that freedom has been to our undoing, that we are unworthy of it, that the Revolutionary Army of Russia is not a force to be reckoned with, but a weak, distracted mob, unworthy to be free.

"No. I know the Russian nation and the Russian soldier. I am a Russian soldier myself, and I can answer to the Russian people for their Fatherland. I declare to them that we will fulfil our duty to a victorious end, and win for the Fatherland an honourable peace, crowned with a glorious freedom which we will ensure to ourselves for ever. We will be ready, then, to defend at whatever sacrifice what we have won, and at the right moment to throw ourselves upon the enemy and crush him.

"All hail, then, to Russia, our Mother. Long may she endure. All hail, too, to our Provisional Government and to our War Minister, Kerensky, whose hope is in us. And I, fellow-soldiers and officers, promise them that we will honourably, faithfully, and gallantly do our duty.

"Victory is to him who goes forward, but he who awaits the enemy's attack dies without honour. Our will is to conquer."

Kerensky had traversed the front and addressed the soldiers, firing them with his burning words, and it seemed at first that the commander and the War Minister had indeed breathed something of their own spirit into the army. As the news of Russian victories was carried through the world, men recalled the irresistible *élan* of the French revolutionary armies, and judged that the Russian troops were about to parallel their achievement.

The part of the line chosen for attack was the southern sector, which had been the region of the great Russian successes in the previous year; but Brussiloff's plan was not destined to mature. The revolutionary spirit of aversion from war had eaten insidiously into the resolution of the armies, and in the event the offensive covered but a small section of the line between the Carpathians and the Pripet Marshes. An advance in the Kovel-Lutsk sector, where the Russians had broken through and threatened Kovel in 1916, proved abortive. It appears from the Russian reports that the Russian plan of action had been treacherously carried to the Germans by deserters.

The main offensive, however, along the front between the Brody-Lemberg railway and the Dniester met with an immediate success, though at a price which had much to do with the later breakdown. The command massed together the regiments (and there were, of course, some—the ultra pacifists being merely a dangerous minority) which were known to be reliable. Contingents of officers led the attack, and delegates of the army committees went in front to cheer the troops. The Russians in their hour of need had been able to draw on the Allies for very material help. Never had the provision of guns and ammunition been so ample on the Eastern front. British and Belgian armoured motor cars co-operated in the attack, and France had furnished artillery and airmen. It was not, probably, a mere coincidence that the date for the infantry attacks was fixed for the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, the scene of the first great offensive of the volunteer armies of Britain.

The defensive system against which the Russians were now to throw themselves was much stronger even than that which they had carried in the previous year, for the enemy had spared no pains to elaborate it. The infantry attack was preceded by a constant bombardment for two days of the enemy line along a front of 200 miles from the middle Stokhod down to the Bukovina frontier. The bombardment was not equally intense along the whole sector. One centre of the greatest severity was the twenty miles about the fortified position of Brzezany, one of the strongest places on the Galician front. It was the nearest point to Lemberg, and the pivot of Count Bothmer's defence of the Galician capital.

General Gutor's plan was to breach the sector north and south of the town with Belkovitch's 7th Army; then to extend the attack northward with Erdelli's 11th Army; and finally, with Korniloff's 8th Army, to resume the operation of turning Lemberg from the south, which had been interrupted the year before. To the north of Brzezany the village of Koniuchy, lying in a wooded valley, with the enemy entrenched on the hilltop to the east, was taken, and the forest beyond was penetrated. A division of Finnish troops fought here with the greatest heroism, and with the other storming troops suffered severe losses. South of Brzezany the Siberian army corps captured three systems of entrenchments. In this brilliant first day's victory there were captured 173 officers, 10,000 men, seven guns, and seven machine guns.

The second day's offensive continued the tale of victory in spite of the abortive struggle at Kovel, where, owing to treachery in their own ranks, the Russians lost heavily to no purpose. On 2nd July the Russians had to meet the enemy's counter-attacks, and about Brzezany these were delivered by German troops. In spite of this the Russians made an advance up the Tarnopol railway near Zborov, and the number of prisoners was increased to 300 officers and 18,000 men. Twenty-nine guns and thirty-three machine guns were now in the hands of the Russians, and many besides must have been destroyed in the preliminary bombardment. Much of the fighting was of a hand-to-hand character, and in this the Russians excel. Brzezany itself, however, defended by strong reinforcements brought up by the German commander, held out and put a check on the advance.

But General Brussiloff's plan was to open up as big a sector of the front as possible, and then to set his generals to attack at various points until, if his plan were completely successful, the whole front would give way. The second phase of the offensive saw the thrust applied farther south, while the opposed armies were struggling about Brzezany. On 8th July the 8th Army of General Korniloff, the former Governor of Petrograd, opened an attack along the twenty miles lying below the Dniester near Halicz. He was opposed by the 3rd Austrian Army of General von Tersztyansky, who had five infantry and one cavalry division to meet Korniloff's eight divisions. The odds were not so disproportionate as on the northern part of the battle front, but Korniloff attacked with such fury that the Russians were able to force the whole of the sector on the first day, and to take a string of villages, including Jesupol. The cavalry took up the pursuit, and the enemy was forced back a distance of seven miles. Over 7,000 prisoners and 48 guns were taken. Two days later General Tcheremisoff, whose corps lay on Korniloff's right flank, marched with his troops into Halicz, the important Dniester bridgehead and the key to the southern approach to Lemberg. Its position had been turned, but the Austrians evacuated in good order. On the next day Kalusz, to the south-west of Halicz, and, but a



few days before, Tersztyansky's headquarters, fell to the Russians, a sign in itself of the Austrian disorganisation.

The possibilities opened up by the Russian success were enormous. In three days' fighting, the Russians had advanced to a depth of fifteen miles on a front of thirty miles, and captured 10,000 prisoners, 80 guns, and large quantities of stores. The nature of the country between the Dniester and the Carpathians would normally render an advance difficult; and the success of the Russians led many to believe that they might advance to Stryj, due south of Lemberg, and from the west threaten the German positions north of the river. The vision of the onward march of the victorious Revolutionary troops loomed large in those days. But in point of fact the limits of the Russian success had been reached. The tide was soon to turn with a vengeance. It is said that General Korniloff's order of the day was, "Carry with you freedom to all nations, happiness and justice to all who work." But the tide of democratic enthusiasm refused the channel of military activity.

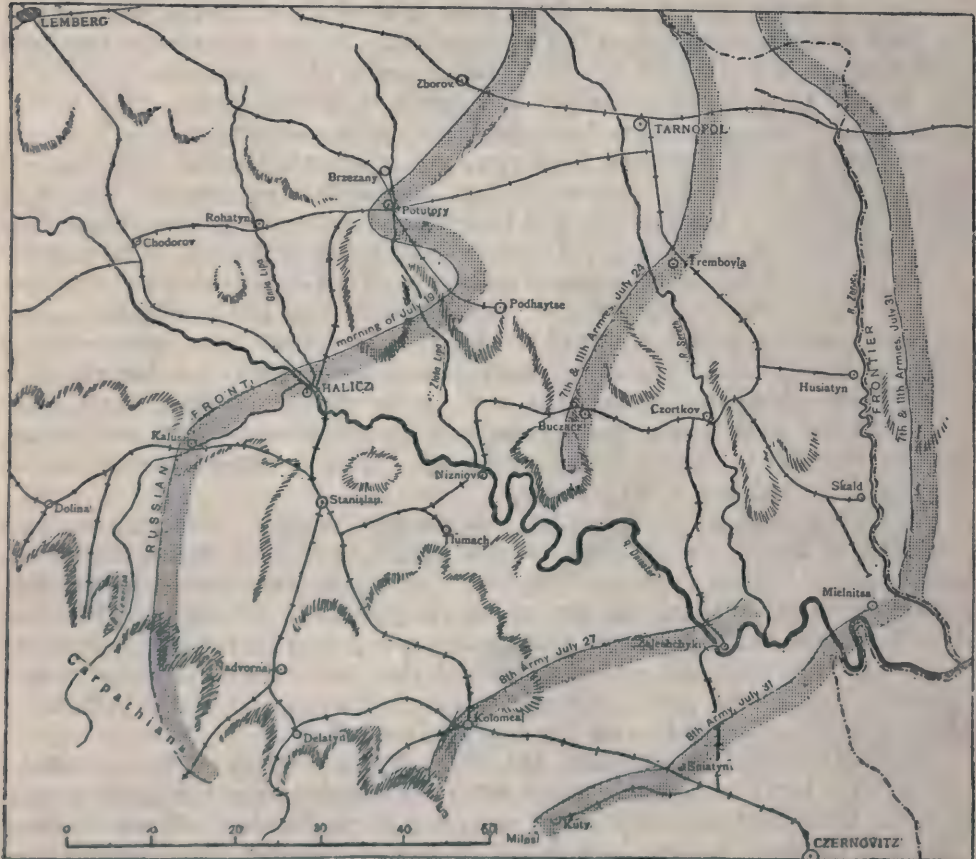
On 15th July the Austrians, having received substantial German reinforcement, began a series of vigorous counter-attacks. Korniloff's army was the weakest of the three engaged in the offensive, and his successes had not been won without loss. Moreover, many of the soldiers got drunk on the spoils of Kalusz. The counter-attack was met at first with a vigorous resistance. The Germans struck at the most westerly point of the Russian advance. The Russian troops had been thrown across the river Lomnitza, along a length of between thirty and forty miles, sometimes to a depth of sixteen miles. The westernmost part of the advance lay across the river only ten miles from the old line, and here the Germans struck their first counter blow. At the same time a more determined resistance was made to the Russian troops attempting to cross the river farther south. Even now the Russians improved their positions, and took 1,600 prisoners.

On the following day the enemy pressure was transferred to the Russian positions north-east of Kalusz, and the Russians were obliged to abandon Kalusz, and subsequently all the Lomnitza positions. It was on this day that the Bolshevik (Majority) section of the Social Democrats attempted a *coup d'état* in Petrograd, and for two days there was heavy fighting. Lenin's agents reported to the troops that the Bolsheviks were in control of Petrograd, and that there was no need for further fighting. And at this point the enemy struck at the positions of the 11th Army about Zborov, where the Russian line covered Tarnopol.

The first attacks were withstood, but, in the candid words of the Russian official report, "the 607th Mlynov Regiment left their trenches voluntarily and retired, with the result that the neighbouring units had to do likewise." It soon became clear that the army had not been braced by victory, but that whole sections were unwilling not only to attack but even to resist. On the 18th Korniloff was called to supersede Gutor, and he left Tcheremisoff to command the 8th Army. The breakdown occurred before Korniloff was able to take the reins.

The Russian line was the less strong because General Brussiloff had not been able to put into force his plan of rapid and successive blows at various parts of the front. Only two sectors had been attacked, and this again was probably due to the disaffection among the troops. In the 7th and 11th Armies north of the Dniester the new spirit spread. The reserves ordered up to fill the gap left by the recalcitrants held mass meetings instead to decide what course of action they should take, and then fled in panic as the Germans poured through the gap. The 7th Army, with

its right flank left uncovered, caught the infection and fled too. Guns and supplies were abandoned, and the Russian troops themselves pillaged the country as they pursued their terror-stricken course. The retreat of the armies north of the Dniester necessitated that of Tcheremisoff's 8th Army to the south of the river. It had to fall back to the east of Stanislaw, which had been taken in General Brussiloff's offensive of the previous year. North of the Dniester the headlong flight of the armies took them beyond Tarnopol, which had not been abandoned even in the great retreat of 1915, and to the line of the river Sereth. The Russian *communiqués* were



The Russian Retreat in Galicia, July 1917.

startling in their frankness, and this from a double motive. Their tone was inspired by the new policy of simplicity and frankness which were the ideal notes of the Revolution; and the Command, too, felt that it was important that the Russian people should realise the situation. The Russian armies were sensitive to the pulse of things at home, and the nation's sense of shame might revivify it. The disastrous effects of the removal of real discipline from the army are suggested in various phrases of these reports. The "retreat was almost uninterrupted." The troops showed "complete disobedience towards their commanders."



Brussiloff's resourcefulness was shown in his attempt to gain time to rally his troops by initiating an attack at Krevo towards Vilna, the most important railway junction behind the enemy front. The Russians penetrated the line to a distance of two miles and took 1,000 prisoners; but there again the vacillation of the troops paralysed the success of the movement. South-west of Dvinsk ground was won and lost in the same way. The Rumanian 2nd Army, under Avarescu, in a brilliant operation attempted a diversion, and pierced the German line in the Putna valley, capturing some thousands of prisoners and nineteen guns.

But it was all in vain. Twelve Russian divisions had given way before only one Austrian and two German divisions, and were in flight before them along a line of nearly 170 miles. The Commissaries of the army of the south-western front and of the 8th Army lodged a demand that the abolished death penalty should be restored. They supported their appeal by heartbreaking details of the betrayal of those who stood by those who fled. For it was by no means all the troops who were demoralised by the new wine of the Revolution. Many units fought splendidly, and many an officer went forward to certain death in the hope of inspiring his men.

The death penalty was restored on 25th July, but the restoration of discipline could not be effected immediately by one drastic decree. The Germans pressed the Russian troops out of Galicia and Bukovina to their own frontier. They did not have it all their own way. There was some severe rearguard fighting, and the British armoured cars performed good service. At the frontier river Zbrucz Korniloff succeeded in rallying the southern army. The Russians prevented the enemy crossing the upper part of the river, though they effected a passage lower down. But the limits of the Russian retreat had at length been reached. Either the Russian resistance was too strong after all, or the enemy's resources too weak.

General Gutor, upon whom fell some of the blame for this shameful episode, was only culpable in choosing to make a heavy attack on Brzezany, where the positions were of unique strength. The 7th and 11th Armies mustered fifty divisions against thirty on the enemy's front. If Korniloff's army had been stronger and only a detaining attack had been delivered by the 7th Army at Brzezany, the course of things might have been vastly different. There can be no doubt that the heavy losses east of Brzezany had a great effect upon the wavering divisions. But it is idle to speculate.

The worst was still to come. After driving back the Russians to their Besarabian-Galician frontier, the German Staff directed its attention to Rumania. The Rumanians had retained their *moral*. They were less inflammable, less simple, and more loyal to their country. Towards the end of July they even took the offensive with a Russian unit on the upper waters of the Putna. In three days they had advanced seven and a half miles, captured many guns, and secured between 2,000 and 3,000 prisoners. The advance continued until Mackensen began his counterstroke, which was directed to turning the Rumanians out of the small portion they still held of their Fatherland. The western front of the Rumanian position was fed by the railway which runs northwards from Foczani, and is joined to the Jassy railway by the short branch line between Marasesti and Tecuciu. If the Rumanians lost this line, their whole western front, including the sector upon which they were successfully fighting, would be imperilled. It was this that Mackensen threatened by his attack against the Susitza, where the Rumanian lines covered the railway line. He began his assault at the time that the Austrians were recovering the Bukovina.

With the fall of Czernowitz on 2nd August, Rumania was attacked from three directions. From the capital of the Bukovina the Austrians turned south. Other armies were supporting Mackensen's thrust to the north by striking eastward. Mackensen himself made way against the fiercest resistance little by little. The army which had advanced so buoyantly just before fell back upon Ocna. But it was 9th August before Mackensen's troops forced the passage of the Susitza. The position of the Rumanians now became so grave that Jassy, the new temporary capital, was prepared for evacuation. But the Rumanians faced their severest test of the war with courage and vigour. They counter-attacked from Ocna with success ; but the struggle covered 100 miles of difficult country, and on the north and on the south the Rumanians were giving ground. On 13th August the crossing where the Marasesti-Tecuciu railway cuts the Sereth was lost. But the next week saw little change. In spite of the fiercest pressure, the Austro-Germans made little headway. They outnumbered and outgunned the Russo-Rumanians, but not until towards the end of the month were they able to report any significant success. On the 28th a Russian division became infected with the same instability which had destroyed the position in Galicia, and the Austro-Germans were able to advance and capture prisoners. In the Foczani area another Russian division failed to stand ; but no profit accrued to the Austro-Germans. The defaulting divisions were replaced by Rumanian troops and the front restored. In the second week of September the Russo-Rumanians counter-attacked, and gradually the fighting died down in the Rumanian field in alternative attacks of decreasing violence. It was the first great rebuff to Mackensen. The offensive which Ludendorff had favoured "came to nothing," and he had reluctantly to be content with that.

## IX. THE CARSO AND THE BAINSIZZA.

THE rôle of Italy in the war offered fewer opportunities for varying the means of fulfilling it than that of any other nation. The Trentino, as we have seen, jutted out into the Italian plain like a huge springboard. To emerge from it was easy ; to enter it one of the most difficult military problems conceivable. It is true that when Napoleon chose to march upon Vienna by Tarvis, he first of all saw his lieutenant, Joubert, installed at Trent, on the main highroad, before proceeding eastwards. But armies in those days had not the dimensions of to-day ; and Joubert had the advantage of fighting the deciding battle in the plain and of seeing his opponent retire eastwards. The Austrians had not sufficient troops to hold the passes ; and if they had had, and had also possessed even a remote approach to the French generalship, the position would have been much as it remained during the war. The Italians deserved every credit for advancing as far as they did into the rocky gorges towards Trent. But if we are to assume that the prospect of a campaign in the Trentino was ruled out, there remained only the Italian eastern frontier as a field for the offensive, and Italian military men had ever looked in that direction for the possible offensive if they should ever meet Austria on such terms that they could pass to the offensive at all. The Isonzo front had an additional advantage for offensive operations in that it looked to the heart of the enemy, and offered the best chance of dealing with his armies.



General Cadorna had, therefore, delivered several great attacks on the Isonzo front. The Germans and Austrians derisively numbered them, so that the attack in August 1917 was labelled the "Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo." This was to obscure the whole point and purpose of these battles, which, whatever their territorial results, were eating up the Austrian reserves. The Trentino frontier had first been made secure before the first moves were made eastwards. But it was not so secure that a great enemy offensive in 1916 could not make such strides towards the Venetian plain that many thought the whole Italian plan would come to nought. Russia had then come to the aid of Italy, and the Italians had rallied and driven the invader back until equilibrium was established. Upon the positions then reached the opposing armies had stood, and they were presumed to be strong enough to permit of another eastern movement.

General Cadorna had then attacked once more, and had captured Gorizia and carried his line forward on the Carso. The Italian operations for the 1917 campaign had been arranged in concert with the Allies, and Cadorna was ready to begin some six weeks before the weather permitted. His plan was conditioned by the positions which opposed him. In the warfare of positions the defence naturally centred in certain dominating centres. While these stood a considerable elasticity in their neighbourhood could be allowed. A fortified line came to be as strong as its strongest positions. On the Isonzo front there were three of these foci: the Hermada position, which supported the defence of the Carso plateau; the San Gabriele *massif*, which dominated the issue from Gorizia; and the hilly group, sometimes called the Lom position, which gave the strength to the Tolmino bridgehead. Cadorna had delivered several attacks against the first two, and his spring offensive contemplated another against the first, which barred the coast route to Trieste. But his plan included an elaborate feint towards the central and northern pivots of the defence.

On 12th May a heavy bombardment was opened over the whole front between Tolmino and the sea, and on the 14th the infantry attacked on the eight-mile front between Plava and the north of Gorizia. The Plava bridge was insufficient to support the attack, and another was thrown across the river near Zagora. At night the Alpini and Bersaglieri constructed another at Bodrez, north of Plava, and having crossed the river maintained themselves there, a little island in a sea of Austrians, for four days. The bridge was shattered behind them, and the swollen river interposed an effective barrier; but when they were withdrawn on the 18th they had carried out a useful diversion under cover of which strong positions had been captured. The troops of General Capello's 2nd Army which operated on this sector had by that time made good the south-western approaches of the Bainsizza plateau and had secured observation over the rear of Monte Santo.

Advancing at noon on the 14th, the Udine brigade quickly seized the loop of the river above Plava as the Florence brigade were flowing over the northern spurs of Monte Kuk and the Avellino brigade were storming the fortified village of Zagomila. Farther south the troops had swept over the lower slopes of Monte Santo. The following day the capture of Monte Kuk was completed, and the heights of Vodice were won by the 16th. The impetus of the advance in hill country of this sort wears off quickly, and on the third day the Austrians were beginning to deliver heavy counter-attacks. But, except at Monte Santo, the positions were not only held but even improved in the violent exchanges of the following week, despite the reinforcement of the Austrian troops holding the sector.

Meanwhile the troops had been attacking skilfully and spiritedly on the southern outlet of the Trentino and in the north of the Carso. Capello had now served his purpose, and on the 23rd, after a terrific bombardment, the Duke of Aosta's 3rd Army advanced at four o'clock against the Carso positions. Bagni, in the coastal marshes, was stormed. Jamiano was captured, and the Bolognese swept past the fortified positions west of Castagnevizza. These successes gave the Italians the first two defensive lines between Castagnevizza and the sea. On the two following days Hudi Log was captured, and the Bologna brigade entered the western streets of Castagnevizza; while farther south, under the fire of British monitors, Flondar was taken. The weather had now broken, but advances were still made on the southern part of the Carso. San Giovanni was captured, but the little hill below it could not be held under the fire from Hermada. By the end of the month the 3rd Army were on the slopes of this great bastion; but the troops were weary, and it was necessary to pause for reorganisation. The Duke of Aosta had taken 16,568 prisoners and 20 guns, making in all nearly 24,000 prisoners in a fortnight. The Italians, however, had lost heavily, and in the detached engagements they had lost nearly 14,000 men.

On 1st June the counter-attacks began. Boroévitch, the Austrian commander, was a skilful general, and the new positions could not be consolidated before the full force of his recoil was felt. The counter-attack was delivered between Gorizia and the sea. An attempt was made to outflank the Italian positions by an advance north of the Castagnevizza road; but the initial successes could not be maintained. But farther south the Austrians were able to force the Italians out of San Giovanni, and even from Flondar. At the end of the struggle Hermada was once more inviolate, and the Italians had been swept back over a mile off its slopes. Cadorna had to realise that his successes were merely credits which the future might or might not meet, whereas his losses were real. He saw that he required much more artillery and heavy reinforcements if he were ever to secure any successes beyond these tactical advances. But the Allies were unable to send troops, and the British could only afford sixteen batteries of heavy guns. Cadorna had therefore to depend upon himself for his summer offensive, and it opened in strangely changed circumstances. In a sense it was timed to assist Russia, whose army had by this time been driven from all but a tiny corner of Austrian territory, and was even fighting at one point in Bessarabia. It coincided with a great quickening in the Allies' offensive operation on the Western front. The Third Battle of Ypres had been resumed, and there was fierce fighting at Lens. And on part of the Eastern front Marshal Mackensen was struggling to drive the Russo-Rumanians off the last Rumanian territory.

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It was in such an atmosphere that the new offensive opened; but the first news had not reached Britain before the reports of another successful French battle at Verdun were to hand. The armies engaged in the new Italian offensive were again the 3rd of the Duke of Aosta operating upon the Carso front up to Gorizia, and the 2nd of General Capello on the Upper Isonzo. A great and furious bombardment opened upon the 18th of August at dawn. It covered the whole front from Tolmino to the sea. The Italian artillery had been strengthened considerably. Cadorna had fought most of his previous battles with field and lighter artillery, reinforced only by *bombarde*, a species of heavy mortar which was neither over-precise in aim nor very long lived. But the new battle saw a great deal of heavy



artillery, and sixteen batteries manned by British gunners. There were also British and Italian monitors, mounting the heaviest guns, operating from the sea. It was the first time, indeed, that the Italian Staff had felt even moderately reassured as to their artillery preparation, for the positions against which they were to operate were such that nothing but the amplest bombardment could shake them. They were hewn from the solid rock, which had been tunnelled and blasted to offer the stoutest and most ingenious resistance to advance.

The preliminary bombardment over, the infantry advanced to the attack on the morning of the 19th, and immediately a confused battle was joined over a front of forty miles. It seemed that Cadorna was following the Napoleonic "engage and see;" but his plan was much more definite. He attacked with apparently equal force all along the line. He had advanced across the Carso so often before, and Trieste was supposed to be so much his lure, that the Austrians regarded the northern attack as a containing blow to pin down the troops there while the main assault was delivered across the Carso. This was the exact opposite of the Italian plans, which were shaped to profit by the previous constancy of their purpose. The main attack was delivered across the northern sector of the Bainsizza plateau, whose western wall fits into the western curve of the Isonzo above Gorizia. Near the town lie the group of hills, Monte Santo, San Gabriele, and San Daniele, near which begins the Chiapovano valley which runs round the eastern face of the plateau. Monte Kuk and Vodice, peaks captured in the May offensive, lie on the western and river side of the plateau. It might have seemed that the plateau was still the impregnable barrier it was supposed to be; but the whole of the position was severely tested. On its northern sector it is cut by the north-westerly course of the Avscek, which enters the Isonzo above Bodrez. South of the Avscek lies the Jelenik ridge, which, running southwards, opposed its face to the eastern advance of the Italians. On the first day of the offensive the Italian Alpini crossed the river north of Anhovo. The sappers had flung fourteen pontoons across the river during the night in spite of the heavy counter-bombardment by the Austrians; and the attacking troops in the dark of the morning were covered by smoke clouds and assisted by the dazzling gleams of searchlights which blinded the defenders. Thus protected, they began to swarm up the high escarpment of the plateau. Below Anhovo they were already in possession of the peaks Kuk and Vodice which form the plateau's western sentinels; and from that point to the sea—some twenty-five miles—the assailants swarmed across the enemy's first defensive system and captured 7,500 prisoners. The struggle was fast and fierce. From the air 208 aeroplanes, manned by some of the most daring fliers in the world, bombed the Austrian lines, and flying low down, harassed the defending infantry with their machine guns. At some places the struggle split up into a hundred small fights. In fighting over such uneven ground this is one of the greatest handicaps, for the force of the blow tends to be dissipated by the lack of unity in control. The Austrians, ever at their best against the Italians, fighting skilfully, were thus able to cut off small bodies which had become detached here and there. Yet the success of the first attack was incontestable, and a great wave of enthusiasm swept over Italy.

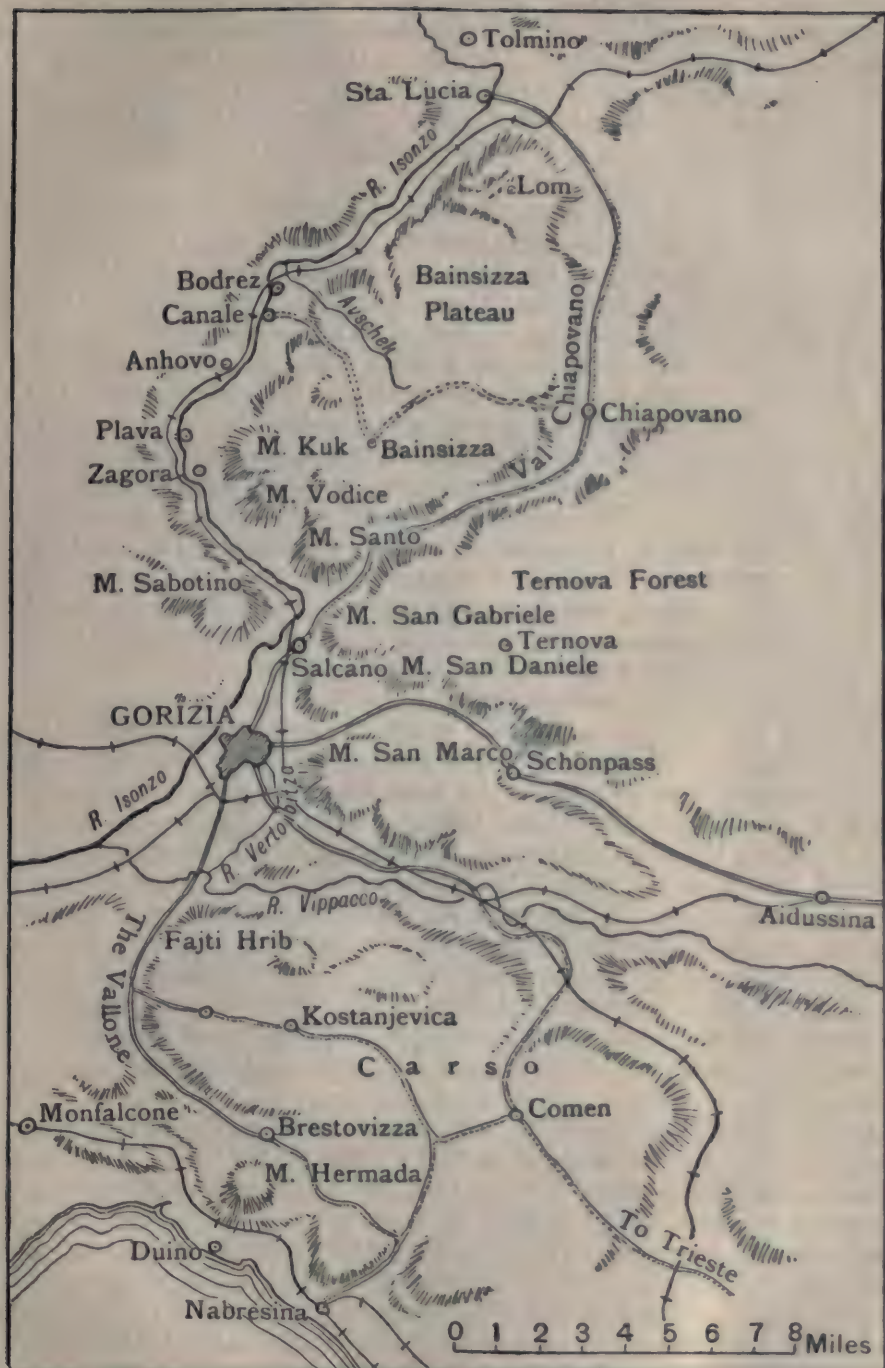
It has been pointed out that Cadorna was slow to reveal his plan. There was little in the first day's *communiqué* about the attack north of Anhovo, though it was with the troops who fought there that the Italian minister Bissolati crossed the river, and thus suggested the importance of the sector. The Alpini and Bersaglieri

on this part of the line advanced one and a half miles on a front of ten miles—a truly great feat, considering all the difficulties presented by a river running through something like a gorge. On the second day the successes on the Carso must have suggested to the Austrians that the danger zone lay there. The Bari, Ficeno, and Cosenza brigades stormed the heavily fortified defences between the village of Corite and Selo, only three-quarters of a mile away. It was here that General Diaz, the future commander-in-chief, was proving himself as brilliant an executant as he had been a Staff officer. The thrust at this point threatened the strong position on Stari Lokva, and finally the great fortified centre of Monte Hermada, the key to the Carso plateau. If the blow could be pressed well east of Stari Lokva, it would turn the positions on Hermada from the north. The monitors and floating batteries already turned it from the sea. The number of aeroplanes operating on the second day was larger than ever. They bombed successfully the approaches to Selo and Corite, the eastern slopes of Hermada, and the northern railway junction at Tarvis. The number of prisoners had now risen to over 10,000. On the third day of the battle attention was first directed unambiguously to the Bainsizza plateau, for it was on that day that the Caproni aeroplanes began to devote themselves to the Chiapovano valley. Cadorna realised now that his best chance was to exercise his maximum pressure across the plateau. If he could press his advance to a certain point he must turn the *massif* of San Gabriele, and at the same time he would be able to take the Lom plateau in flank. He would thus have captured two of the Austrian pivotal positions, and the Isonzo line would be no more.

On the third day the toll of prisoners was swelled by an additional 3,000, and the pressure along the line began to achieve solid results. It was on this day that the Italians, pouring down the Avscek valley, came to Vrh, a tiny village on the northern end of the Jelenik ridge, and captured it; and the Bersaglieri began to turn southward towards the rear of the ridge. The troops farther south broke through the three lines of the heights below the ridge. The Jelenik ridge as an obstacle was no more; and the Italians turned southwards towards Monte Santo while the vanguard was continuing to thrust eastward. On the 24th the troops stormed Monte Santo, one of the most brilliant feats of the war.

Monte Santo is the highest of the peaks which make a sort of amphitheatre about the northern and eastern flanks of Gorizia and prevent any issue from the town along the Vippacco valley while the Carso is unreduced. The May offensive, which won the peaks Kuk and Vodice, failed to turn Monte Santo, but two miles from the latter. It was covered by a great artillery concentration on the wooded hollows about its flanks. It was tunnelled and trenched and wired, so that every small advance presented the gravest obstacles. Had it not been for the rapid advance on the Bainsizza plateau which placed the Italians on its flanks, it is difficult to see how it could ever have been won. While the Italian flag was being planted on Monte Santo, the troops were hastening eastwards towards the Chiapovano valley. The battle had come to a pause on the Carso, but every effort was still being made to clear the Bainsizza plateau completely. The very successes of the offensive were beginning to prove a handicap. The infantry had now crossed many miles of the most broken country it is possible to conceive. The artillery had torn the ground to bits. The roads—they were never more than tracks—were pitted and scarred, so that communication was most difficult. The mere supply of the troops presented almost insurmountable difficulties; and to bring artillery across such country was





The Bainsizza and Carso Battlefields.

impossible as yet. Some of these difficulties were coped with simply through the abandonment of stores and guns by the Austrians. But even this could do no more than prevent the situation becoming hopeless. It could not, however, prevent the force of the blow weakening. The Italians were coming into contact with the prime problem which faced the Allies about this time. Every blow tended to lose its force at the decisive moment owing to the lack of any means to supply the fuel of attack, when it had reached a certain point.

The Austrians could draw no help from the Carso, but they were able to amass certain reinforcements in the Bainsizza plateau. At the end of the month the Italians had taken almost the whole of the Bainsizza plateau, and had used Monte Santo as a support for an attack upon San Gabriele, the second of the three sentinel peaks overlooking Gorizia. They had gained part of its slopes, but were struggling there against great odds. The fringes of the Ternova forest, which lies east and south of the Bainsizza plateau, offered splendid cover for the Austrian guns, and they were able to retain the peak and flanks of San Gabriele. On the Carso the Italians had advanced to the slopes of the rocky bastion of Hermada, but there found themselves held off inexorably by the well held and cunningly devised defences of the Austrians and Germans. They had secured 30,000 prisoners and many guns, much material and ammunition, even some horses and aeroplanes. The extent of their success was considerable enough to encourage wild hopes, and Cadorna had been looking across to Laibach and hoping to cause sufficient disorganisation by his advance across the Bainsizza plateau to debouch into the Idria valley and turn all the positions lying to the south. He had, however, to pause and re-form his battle-weary soldiers, while the Austrians continued to bring up reinforcements from the Russian front and adjacent sectors. At a moderate estimate the Austrians had lost well over 100,000 troops, killed, wounded, and taken prisoner; and compared with this the territorial gain was small. Its most important feature was the promise of easier gains in the future. The whole of the Italian line on the Isonzo front leaned over from the coast northwards, as though it would fall eastward and then southward, cutting off the whole of the Istrian peninsula, with Trieste as one of the smaller gains involved. The picture is not indeed misleading, for it was precisely as a great turning movement that the offensive had been initiated; and the successes had been gained by turning the Jelenik ridge from the village Vrh, and Monte Santo from the Bainsizza plateau. A little more success and the whole front might have given; and after-events, which caused so much distress in Italy and so much misgiving among the whole of the Allies, might never have happened.

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General Cadorna's difficulty we have seen. When at the end of August he paused to consolidate, he had to cope with a problem that might well have defied the most determined general. On this front there were perhaps a million soldiers, and the line had been moved forward in places as much as six miles. New roads had to be built; new bridges strengthened; old roads rediscovered and repaired; defence lines to be raised. The immense amount of traffic and labour necessitated by such work can be better imagined than described. Even if the new territory had been flat, the difficulties would have been sufficiently great. But the new ground ran through the whole gamut of obstacles. For some twelve miles a gorge had to be crossed, and then the hard ground of the plateau, rising here and there into ridges, lay ahead. The simile of a hive has been used for a description of organised and



busy labour. That of an army organising the torn hinterland of a line just carried forward into enemy territory would be far better. For some days the forty miles or so between the north of the Bainsizza plateau and the sea swarmed with men. Armies were being re-formed and relieved; wounded were being evacuated from the field stations; supplies were being hurried forward; guns were being newly placed; ammunition was being carried ahead to huge dumps. The tracks were alive with traffic, and at the same time with the engineers making them fit for traffic. On the other hand, the Austrians utilised the respite to bring up reinforcements from Russia. The storm centre of the struggle had now become San Gabriele. The Italians attacked it from Monte Santo, and at the same time attempted to debouch eastwards from Gorizia. The offensive had split into local engagements. The Austrians meanwhile delivered a fierce counter-attack across the Bainsizza plateau; but on 4th September they transferred the front of attack to the Carso, striking from Castagnevizza to the sea. Selo, taken by General Diaz, was the object of seven great assaults. The Austrians were not able to achieve any great success there, but between Brestovizza and the sea they at first pressed back the Italian line. A fierce counter-attack restored the position. Farther north the Austrians were weakening about Gabriele, and they were forced to yield over 1,600 prisoners. Indeed, whatever the territorial position, few days at this time failed to swell the total of Austrian prisoners in Italian hands.

At the end of the first week of September the weather changed; violent storms began to sweep the country. The rains filled the streams and turned them into torrents. The ground, beaten to powder, in the hollows became lakes. Mists and fogs cast a curtain over the landscape, through which it was impossible to see any distance. On Saturday (9th) and Sunday, San Gabriele and its neighbourhood were under the heaviest Italian bombardment. By this time the number of Austrian prisoners had risen to 30,671, and the Italians had also taken 145 guns, 94 trench mortars, 322 machine guns, and 11,196 rifles. In addition to this, they had smashed much more material to bits. At the same time, the Austrians claimed 18,500 Italian prisoners. On the 11th September the Austrians made a most determined counter-attack upon the new positions on the Bainsizza plateau; but although wave after wave of storming troops was hurled against the Italians, no success was achieved. At the same time they assaulted again and again the Italian positions on San Gabriele. The Italians had by this time pressed forward to the crest of San Gabriele, and during the 11th they maintained their positions. But further assaults on the following day recovered the crest from them, though the Italians still remained on the slopes. On the 13th heavy rains turned the ground into an impassable obstacle, and put a truce to the struggle. On the following day a recovery in the weather permitted the renewal of the battle; but there was little change in the position thereby. The Italians continued their pressure at various points for many days still, but the main readjustment had been made. There were no further considerable gains or losses. But the casualties were put at 155,000, apart from the numbers rendered *hors de combat* by sickness.

The Italians had gained much—so much indeed that some of the Allies began to imagine Laibach theirs for the asking. The idea of a great Allied offensive was mooted. British and French troops were suggested by impatient amateur strategists, who had no just comprehension of the factors involved. It was forgotten, or perhaps not known, that some eighty trains are required for the transport of a single division.

In these days of heavy artillery the number might be considerably higher. There were only two lines from France into Italy by which such troops could come, and their removal would mean the withdrawal of the forces for a number of weeks. It was largely a natural impatience with the progress of the war on the Western front that gave any sort of soil to such impatient suggestions. Since mid-August there had been no considerable activity in France or Belgium. And now, after a month's fighting towards Laibach, dark clouds were forming. Riga had fallen to the Germans. Korniloff had attempted to put behind the Russian Provisional Government the power it so much needed. And Cadorna knew that the enemy were gathering for a supreme effort against his newly gained positions. It is true that, although he had not the resources to continue the offensive, he felt quite confident about his ability to defend, and had so informed the Government. But there were factors in the case that certainly did not support his confidence. There was considerable unrest in Italy. Coal had risen to between £15 and £24 a ton. Food was short to a degree that was only equalled in Germany. In some of the Socialistic centres, such as Turin, the food arrangements came to a breakdown, and while the Italian offensive was just beginning, there was rioting of a serious character. It is not certain how far enemy propaganda was responsible for the outbreak, as it must be remembered that even in Munich there had been riots of so grave a nature that Turkish troops had to be ordered thither. The Italian Government had not the cynical prudence of the Germans. To reduce the city to order, Alpini were called in. Many of them were locally recruited. Most of them most deeply sympathised with the rioters, and they refused to fire. It is easy after the event to moralise, but an elementary acquaintance with human psychology should have shown the risks of such a case. The Alpini were withdrawn, and sent to the front with the bitter memory of the unhappy position into which they regarded themselves as forced by the Government. Sardinian cavalry were more detached, and by their aid, and that of a new supply of bread, the Turinese were brought back to order. But many had been killed or wounded. Over 2,000 had been arrested. Aeroplanes had flown over the streets to break up the barricades by dropping bombs. The memory of such events dies hard. The Alpini went to the front full of bitterness, and even eager for revenge. It seems strange that their idea of revenge should have taken the shape it did. But this is one of the tragedies of a mistake. It may be considered *bona fide*, but that will not prevent its consequences being irreparable.

The Alpini were placed upon a quiet quarter of the front, north of Tolmino. There were but 10,000 of these recalcitrant troops; but the stories they told, and the fire of their indignation, infected the six or seven divisions who stood from Plezzo to Tolmino, in one of the great and obvious doorways through which an enemy might come if he wished to attack the Italians with the greatest advantages in his hands. On this part of the front they lay for about a month, when the chance of their ambiguous revenge came to hand. Its development and history forms the most tragic chapter of Italy's share in the war.



X. THE BALKAN BATTLES.

SARRAIL and Milne had been present at the Rome Conference in which the Italian and Balkan operations had been settled, and the Allied commander quickly began to move. During the winter there had been elaborate and laborious attempts to improve the communications, and considerable reinforcements had been sent to Salonika. On 11th March the French attacked between Lakes Prespa and Ochrida, and an advance from Monastir was made by the French and Italians at the same time. But Resna, at the northern end of Prespa, was never reached; and though Hill 1248, which dominates Monastir, was won, it could not be maintained. The battle only achieved a few small local gains and 2,000 prisoners, and was of less value than the tactical gains in the Doiran area made about the same time by the British.

Meanwhile Milne was preparing for the most serious action yet fought in the Balkans by the British. The sector of attack was the Bulgar positions about Lake Doiran, and at 9.45 P.M. on 24th April, after two days' bombardment, the infantry advanced. The resources in men and material were approximately the same on both sides, and all the advantage lay with the defence. On the right the Devonshires and Berkshires had to cross the steep and wide Jumeaux ravine; and though the men reached it, they could not go farther. The position had been carefully ranged, and mortars and howitzers threw into it a ceaseless rain of shell. The base lay deep in water, and in the result the brigades had to abandon the almost hopeless task, leaving the left wing, Manchesters and Shropshire Light Infantry, exposed to a terrible enfilade fire as a consequence of its advance. Still the men maintained themselves in Jackson ravine, a little beyond the Bulgar first line, and waited, under conditions which were almost intolerable, for relief. The attack in the Monastir sector had been made impossible by a heavy fall of snow.

On 5th May the Greeks made their first important attack on the right bank of the Vardar, and gains between a mile and a third of a mile, on a front of three miles, were secured. On the following day a new British bombardment began, and in the dark of the night, two days later, the infantry attacked between Jumeaux ravine and Lake Doiran. Again a terrible struggle took place; positions were captured, and the men were then bombed and shelled out. The fighting continued until the 20th, involving some of the flower of the British regiments—Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry; but heavy losses were incurred in exchange for small local gains. The same fate befell the Allies who were attacking at the same time from the Vardar to Albania. In the bend of the Cerna the French, Russians, and Italians exercised so great a pressure that a German division was sent there to reinforce the defence. The summer was now approaching, and the marshy district of the Struma could only be inhabited at a risk of a malarial and dysentery list similar to that of the previous summer. It was therefore decided to withdraw to the hills, leaving only detachments to hold the Struma bridgeheads. Under cover of an attack towards Spatovo, west of Demirhissar, the withdrawal was made, and Derbyshire and Surrey Yeomanry maintained the bridgeheads and carried out frequent patrols during the summer. The sick list was considerably reduced by this precaution.

While the Balkan area sank to rest, so far as military operations went, consider-

able readjustments were being carried out in the sphere of politics, and these had a profound bearing upon the subsequent military operations. By May Venizelos was already a power at Salonika, with a force of some three divisions at his disposal. Thessaly was occupied in early June, and on the 11th the French seized the isthmus of Corinth. In the evening M. Jonnart, the Allied High Commissioner, arrived at Athens with a naval force, and informed M. Zaimis, the premier, that King Constantine must abdicate. This the king did, naming his second son, Prince Alexander, as his successor, the Crown Prince having been vetoed by the Allies. Two days later the Allied blockade was raised, and on the 21st Venizelos reached Athens. He at once proceeded to put back the clock. The Chamber legally elected on June 13, 1915, had been illegally dissolved by the king. It was recalled, and on 27th June Venizelos returned to power, and began to set the ship of State on the course desired by the vast majority of the people.

Meanwhile the Allied position in the Balkans had been improved by changes in Albania. The Italians, in February, had moved across Albania and established connections with the French in Macedonia. Four months later, on 3rd June, Italy proclaimed the independence of Albania under her protection, and on 8th June Italian troops occupied Yanina. It was at this point that, cut off completely from Austro-German help, Constantine was called upon to abdicate, and we can measure the impotence of the Central Powers by the fact that they permitted their real, though undisclosed, ally to fall. On 8th September the French and Russians further improved the connections with the Italians in Albania by an advance of twenty miles from Lake Malik, south-west of Ochrida. A few prisoners and much material were captured. But the Balkan area in its larger sense still remained unproductive as a military speculation. The chief result it yielded was the prevention of good submarine bases being established.

## XI. THE BATTLES OF GAZA.

THE operations outside the main areas of the war were apt to be overlooked, except when some spectacular success or defeat drew the eyes of the world thither. Towards the end of 1916 the British forces had begun to move in the most important of these areas. It is indeed impossible to conceive of the operations in the East unless we view them as one and indivisible, and part of the Great War. If the Turks were not able to give more support in Europe, it was because the British and Russians were holding positions which might speedily waken into life if forces were not held ready to deal with any advance from them. General Maude in Mesopotamia, even when held off from Kut, *had to be held off*. The Grand Duke Nicholas in Armenia had to be held there. General Sir Archibald Murray, who commanded the Egyptian troops, was in a less satisfactory position.

Palestine was politically nearer to the heart of Turkey than Mesopotamia, and any Allied successes were bound to have a reaction upon Medina and the Arabian peninsula. Yet, though Murray crossed the Palestinian frontier at the beginning of the year, it was some months before the advance was resumed. General Murray was cautious. Indeed, it may frankly be said, he was over-cautious. Khan Yunus was occupied on 28th February by mounted patrols, and preparations were made for the next operation.



General Maude occupied Bagdad on 11th March, and it was exactly a fortnight later that the next advance of the Palestinian force began. The troops—cavalry, camelry, artillery, and infantry—moved out across the plain towards Gaza in the late afternoon of 25th March. The objective of the advance was the capture of Wady el Ghuzze, a small stream which runs roughly parallel to the Egyptian-Palestine frontier, five miles south of Gaza. The wady was occupied without resistance, and Sir Charles Dobell attempted to seize Gaza by a *coup de main*. The troops had marched along the coast, and went into a dense sea fog on the morning of the 26th, and it seems an odd decision on the part of the commander to give battle under such conditions. The troops could not be reasonably observed or directed. The engagement did not open till 10 o'clock in the morning, and Gaza was not attacked till the late afternoon. The Anzac Mounted Division, under Chauvel, occupied Beit Durdis about 9.30, and sent detachments due west. These troops worked round the northern flank of the Gaza position, and the 2nd Australian Light Horse captured the commander, Musa Kiasim Pasha, and Staff of the 53rd Division as they were hastening to take charge of the position. Another section of the troops actually fought their way into the town, but 200 of them were there surrounded and captured. The Imperial Mounted Division, under Hodgson, reached El Mendur as the Anzacs were entering Beit Durdis, and threw out a protective screen towards the east and north-east. The mounted troops and armoured cars which had captured the commander of the 53rd Division held off three columns with the greatest gallantry and skill. Dallas's 53rd Infantry Division marched on Gaza from the south, covered towards the coast by the Gloster Hussars and the fire of monitors. A brigade of Hare's 54th Welsh Territorial Division joined the 53rd Division during the morning, and captured the lost positions on Ali Muntar, the hill, a mile from Gaza, to which Samson carried the gates. By 5 o'clock the Turks were surrounded in Gaza, and the British troops were fighting in the streets. But it was getting dark, and Dobell apparently never contemplated using his reserve division until it was too late.

The whole battle suffered from a lack of direction. The water gave out, and Dobell ordered the British to fall back. On the following day the Turks attacked in force, but were repulsed by artillery and machine-gun fire, and their cavalry were dispersed by the British mounted troops. Eight armoured cars, finding 5,000 Turks with guns between them and the main force, fought their way through at dawn, killing some 350 men. The next day the infantry retired behind the line of the Wady el Ghuzze, and the Turks were too heavily beaten to follow. They had left 950 prisoners in the hands of the British, and their total losses were put at 8,000. The British lost 800 in killed alone, and the number cut off in Gaza was about 200. It was not the reverse the enemy represented it to be. But it was not the victory it was hoped by the British commander to be. Sir Charles Dobell was the general who had been in chief command in Cameroon, and his direction on this occasion had been obviously undecided. Reserves are for use, and the true general shows his metal by putting them into the battle at the psychological moment. General Murray, however, left Dobell in command for another attempt to capture Gaza.

**Second Battle of Gaza.**—On the second failure Murray relieved him of his command.

General von Kressenstein had now determined to hold Gaza. The first battle showed that he disposed of considerable reserves, and the historic Gaza, with its

memories of Ptolemy and Antiochus, was now defended by a mass of heavy artillery. Water supplies had been brought forward, and the railhead was now at Deir-el-Belah. The Turkish force amounted to some five divisions of infantry and one of cavalry. Dobell's force now included the 74th Division, making four infantry divisions in all, with two mounted divisions and the Camel Corps. It is doubtful if with such forces the attack ever had a chance of success.

Dobell's plan was to capture the city in two stages. On the opening day the ridges south of Gaza to Sheikh Abbas were to be captured, and from thence the final attack would be launched against Ali Muntar and Gaza. With the assistance of artillery and tanks the first stage was easily passed. Mott's 53rd Division covered the coastal region, and the 52nd and 54th, under Major-General W. E. B. Smith, were to carry the ridges below Ali Muntar and Mansura-Sheikh Abbas. This latter



The Second Battle of Gaza.

part of the programme had been carried out by 7 A.M. of the first day, 17th April; and the mounted troops covered the right wing with much skill.

The main attack was delivered two days later, about 7.30 A.M., after nearly two hours' bombardment. The 53rd Division had achieved its first objective by early afternoon, but the final objective, Sheikh Ajlin, was not secured till nightfall. At the other end of the line the Imperial Mounted Division, covered on the right by the Anzac Mounted Division, attempted to storm Atawina Ridge dismounted. But every yard of the ground was ranged, and the Yeomanry, despite all their gallantry, could not make headway. They were well served, too, by the H.A.C.; but the Turkish fire was too heavy and their numbers were too great. The 52nd and 54th Divisions, with the main rôle of the day before them, fared worse. The 52nd, a Scottish Lowland Territorial division, could get no farther than Outpost Hill; and through their inability to debouch from it, the rear brigade was left in the open



under heavy fire, and the 54th Division could not advance. The Camelry, on the right of the 54th, entered Khirbet Sihan, and held it until relieved by a brigade of Yeomanry. At 3 P.M. such was the position. Except on the coastal sector, no significant advance had been made. Dobell, "in view of information received that our attack had not yet succeeded in drawing in the enemy's reserves, decided that the moment had not yet come for an attempt to force a decision by throwing in the general reserve."\* Nevertheless, Murray states that if Dobell had made the venture he might have won the key position, though "with a further loss of 5,000 to 6,000 men." Murray ordered all positions to be maintained, so that a fresh attack might be made the following day on Ali Muntar. During the night Dobell gave it as his opinion, and as that of the other commanders, that a resumption of the attack did not offer sufficient prospect of success to justify its being undertaken. The British losses had been very heavy, probably more than 7,000, and no appreciable gain had been made. The reports in the British press represented the battle as a small skirmish which was not on the whole successful. It was a very clear and significant defeat, and the war in this area fell back upon trench conditions. On 21st April Murray informed Dobell that he was "no longer in a fit state of health to bear the strain of further operations," and relieved him of his command. On 29th June Murray himself was superseded by Allenby. A brilliant cavalry raid, which destroyed part of the Turkish railway between El Audja and Beersheba, was the most significant feature of the next six months before Allenby began to win fame in Palestine.

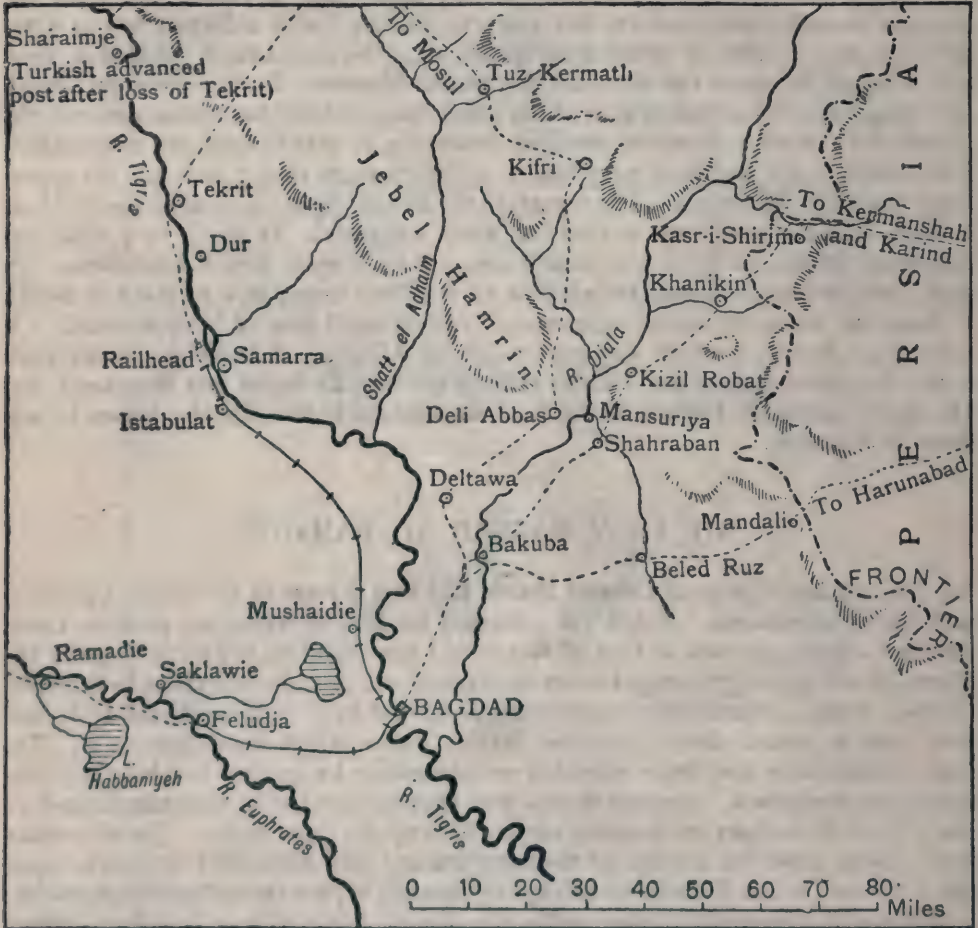
## XII. FROM BAGDAD TO RAMADIE.

By the capture of Bagdad General Maude had won a prize of the greatest political and moral importance. But it yet remained for him to secure his position there. Another experience such as that of Kut would have dealt to British prestige in the East a blow from which it might never have recovered. Bagdad could not be defended *in situ*. It had no natural defences; could be flooded from both north and west; and was open to attack along the three riverine routes which converged on it. The Tigris, Euphrates, and Diala provided useful avenues by means of which the Turks could counter-attack. General Maude saw that he could only maintain himself in the city of the caliphs by throwing out his lines up the three rivers. The immediate task was to seize the control of the inundations; the most obvious was to complete the rout of the Turkish 18th Corps by hustling it past the railhead at Samarra; and it was also necessary to prevent the junction of the 13th Corps, which was falling back from Persia with the Mesopotamian forces. The attempt to accomplish these tasks filled the six weeks which yet remained before the enforced truce of the summer heats, and provided one of the most wonderful episodes of the war. For the men, who had been fighting almost continuously since December, had to take part in eight considerable engagements, and in these and numerous other encounters they made the position at Bagdad secure beyond challenge.

**Mushaidie.**—The first stage in following up the retiring 18th Corps culminated in the battle at Mushaidie, three days after the fall of Bagdad. Three miles below Mushaidie station the Turks had carefully entrenched themselves between the rail-

\* Murray's dispatch.

way and the right bank of the Tigris, six miles to the east. General Cobbe, with the 21st and 28th Brigades of the 7th Division, attacked astride the railway, with the 9th Bhopals on the extreme left. The first assault, at 4.30 P.M., resulted in heavy casualties; but at 6.30 the final attack was well supported by artillery, and achieved complete success with little loss. The attack west of the railway had not been expected, and its effect was decisive. About midnight the Gurkhas and Black



Operations in Mesopotamia in the Summer and Autumn of 1917.

Watch occupied the station. The brigades lost over a third of the number engaged; but the Turks were for the moment driven northward in disorderly flight.

**Jebel Hamrin.**—Before the next considerable battle was fought the 7th Brigade had marched up the Euphrates to prevent the bursting of the dam at Saklawie. They were at Feludja on the 19th, but could not reach Saklawie before the dam had been burst and the water flooded up to the railway embankment at Bagdad. But by this time Keary's 8th and 9th Brigades had marched up the Diala to cut off the 13th Corps, which was thought to be retiring in disorder before the Russians.



The position was very different. Ali Ihsan, the commander of the corps, was a bold and skilful leader, and he retired when he knew that Maude was advancing on Bagdad and threatening his communications; but his most formidable enemies were sickness, hunger, and exhaustion. Keary's column comprised the 8th and 9th Brigades, and the force was much too weak to deal with the Turks. On the 20th the British force was at Bakuba. Three days later it was at Shahraban. The Turks held a strong position astride the Diala, their right at Deli Abbas and their centre in the Jebel Hamrin hills, with the water-course of the Ruz Canal lying in front of their left and centre. A day was lost bringing up fresh bridging material for the canal, and the Turks, fully advertised of what was afoot, prepared to meet Keary's flank attack through the hills. It was beautiful spring weather, and gay flowers decked the plain which ran to the snow-capped hills. The 9th Brigade moved out during the night of the 24th, and by daybreak were in the hills. But beyond the first ridge they made little progress. The guns had not been moved across the Ruz, and there was no artillery support; and as the morning wore on the Turks began to work round the British right. They were well supported by guns, carefully ranged beforehand, and with superior numbers very nearly surrounded the 9th Brigade. A little after 2 P.M. a retirement was ordered, and the Manchesters, Burmans, and Baluchis fell back steadily. The Turkish cavalry prepared to charge across the plain, but were driven off by artillery and machine-gun fire, and the troops fell back across the Ruz. They had been very near disaster, and they only extricated themselves at a cost of 1,177 officers and men—not much less than half of the number in action.

**Dogameh.**—The 13th Corps was slipping across the Diala, and Ali Ihsan was making vigorous attempts to join the 18th Corps on the Tigris. The latter force had entrenched a position at Dogameh in a flat plain, south of the Shatt el Adhaim, and on 29th March the 39th and 40th Brigades attacked the position, and threw the Turks back to the Adhaim, while cavalry and artillery held off the 13th Corps at Deli Abbas. Two days later the village was occupied. The Turks fell back to the Jebel Hamrin, and withdrew from the west of the Diala. It was owing to this that the 13th Lancers were able, on 2nd April, to join hands at Kizil Robat with a squadron of Cossacks. They had worn out their transport, and had long been on short commons. But they were made welcome on ration biscuits, bully beef, jam, and dates; and, says Mr. Candler, enjoyed the best meal they had had for a month.

**The Crossing of the Adhaim.**—The 13th Corps made another attempt to effect a junction with the 18th Corps in the second week in April, and drove back the British cavalry. Ali Ihsan even made an attempt to cut off the horsemen; but the 40th and 39th Brigades were rapidly sent from the Adhaim, and, after a night march of twenty miles, met the Turkish 2nd Division in the open on the 11th, and in four days' fighting pushed them back to the hills once more. The crossing of the Adhaim was now resumed. The Turks had carefully entrenched positions in the angle which the river makes with the Tigris. But General Marshall crossed the river and annihilated the Turkish force by a skilful little action. He feinted with the cavalry brigade on the Turks' left up the Adhaim, made a demonstration at the obvious ford, and meanwhile crossed in force without a casualty on to the finger of land at the junction of the rivers. The East Lancashires and South Lancashires having made good their footing there, the cavalry were brought down the river; and when the troops had pushed the Turkish right from the Tigris, General Cassel's horse

were loosed. Under a heavy bombardment the Lancashires reaped the fruit of their surprise, and the cavalry completed the Turks' discomfiture. Over 1,200 prisoners were taken, and there were no further obstacles between the troops and Samarra. It was a very brilliant little action, showing General Marshall at his best.

**Samarra.**—The way was now open for the final advance on Samarra, where Julian's tomb lies—an abiding memorial of the might of Rome. Sheket Pasha had prepared positions for the defence of the railhead at Istabulat. On 19th April the patrols of Cobbe's column had found the Turks holding entrenchments on the right bank of the Tigris, astride the Dujail Canal. Two strong redoubts, the North and Dujail redoubts, lying forty feet above the flat ground, lay north of the canal, and the entrenchments stretched across the railway and curved back upon it. On the morning of the 21st the Gurkhas and Black Watch followed the barrage to the foot of the mounds, and then raced up the slopes and seized the north and Dujail redoubts almost at the same moment. Within the next half-hour the Black Watch were out and in the Dujail redoubt. The Highlanders stood firm thenceforward, and beat off repeated counter-attacks. Meanwhile the 9th Bhopals had lost very heavily in attempting a flanking movement on the right of the Gurkhas; and on the south of the canal, after the capture of Istabulat Station by the 92nd Punjabis at the opening of the battle, the troops were only able to seize the Turks' first line. It had been a day of bitter fighting over the whole line, and the heroic struggle of the Black Watch and Gurkhas had left the regiments sadly depleted. But early on the next morning the position was found to be evacuated, and the 28th Brigade advanced against the last defence of Samarra. The new line lay beyond the ruins of Istabulat, along a line of ridges between the river and Samarra Station.

The 28th Brigade attacked in the afternoon, and after a tremendous shelling of the ridge positions and an enfilade fire from the left bank of the river, the Leicesters stormed the ridge, and captured a battery of artillery nearly a mile farther on. But Sheket Pasha promptly attacked the rash troops, who had to damage the guns and fall back. Meanwhile the cavalry and armoured cars on the left flank had endeavoured to turn the position, but to no purpose. Yet, despite the inconclusive nature of the action and the heavy British losses, the Turks retired during the night. The guns across the river had enforced their lesson. Next morning, the 23rd, at dawn, Samarra Station was occupied, and a number of engines and trucks were found there.

**Band-i-Adhaim.**—The 13th Corps was now found to be marching down the Adhaim against Marshall's right, and the force had to be beaten before the Samarra position could be secure. On the 24th the 38th Brigade, fresh from the crossing of the Adhaim, found contact with the 14th Division not far from the Tigris, and with the aid of the 35th Brigade attacked and pushed it back to the hills. There the division fell back upon the other division of the 13th Corps, the 2nd, and Marshall reached the Turkish position on the 26th. The Turks had thrown a line of skilful entrenchments about the village Band-i-Adhaim, which stands at a point where the river makes a series of irregular loops about a low mound. Marshall's plan was to pierce the centre and seize the village with the 40th Brigade, while the 38th feinted on the Turks' extreme left. The 35th was to act on the right bank of the river. The Cheshires and South Wales Borderers of the 40th Brigade attacked in the morning of the 30th, went past their objective, seized eight Turkish guns and 800 prisoners. At this point, when the men lay almost two miles from their supports,



a dust storm cut them off from view. Ali Ihsan seized his chance—marched his general reserve across the front of the 38th Brigade, and recovered the village, seven of the guns, and half of the prisoners. The handful of British troops were in a critical plight when the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and Wilts were moved up. Isolated by the sand clouds, a terrible hand-to-hand struggle went on. But despite heavy loss the men held their own, and when the storm abated the Turks were shelled out of their positions. Meanwhile the positions left of the river had suffered so terribly from the bombardment, that when the bombers began to attack in the evening they found the trenches evacuated. The Turks went back finally to the hills. The Borderers and Cheshires entered the fight 670 strong; they came out with 340 men. But they had put the finishing touches to the fighting season by inflicting an enduring respect upon the 13th Corps. In six weeks Maude had firmly established himself at Bagdad by a campaign which was as hard as skilfully fought.

The weather had now become unbearably hot, and the troops had to live through it as best they might. They moved but twice: once in an abortive attack on Ramadie in July, which was interrupted by storm and heat, and was not pressed; and on the second occasion they occupied Beled Ruz on 23rd June, in order to compensate for the Russian withdrawal into Persia. When the curtain rang up on the autumn Maude had no longer the need or the desire to lay any further strain on his transport by continuing his advance, except in so far as this promised to inflict loss on the Turks. But Russia had now fallen out of the war, and Falkenhayn was at Aleppo with some new Turkish divisions withdrawn from the European area.

**Ramadie.**—But it was desirable to compel the Turks to concentrate as far off as possible for any projected attack by the Euphrates route, and to cut them off from supplies from the Lower Euphrates. The 15th Division, under Brooking, was concentrated for the attack by 26th September. Ramadie lies about twenty-five miles west of Feluja, and the troops were concentrated near Madhij, seven miles from Ramadie and three from the outer defence, the Mushaid Ridge. Brooking's force moved out on the night of the 27th in two columns—the 12th Brigade (Dunsford) on the right, and the 42nd (Lucas) on the left. Mushaid Ridge lies between the Euphrates and the Habbaniyah Canal, which flows north-west from Habbaniyah Lake to the Euphrates west of Ramadie. The first objective was the canal crossings, which would give access to the rear of the ridge. By 3 A.M. the dam of the canal was captured and repaired, and the troops crossed rapidly. The main crest of the ridge was now bombarded; but the Turks had evacuated it, and they threw a counter-bombardment against the position. The British, however, had no intention of occupying it. The right column, 12th Brigade, was quickly moved behind the 42nd, and became the left flank of a front facing roughly north, some nine miles from the river, between the Habbaniyah Canal and the Aziziyah Canal. While this readjustment was being made the cavalry brigade rode westward, and in eight hours were established across the Aleppo road, five miles west of Ramadie. The Gurkhas and Dorsets, despite the handicap of advancing over a perfect field of fire, mounted the Ramadie Ridge and dug themselves in, and under cover of this attack the 12th Brigade was able to establish itself on the Aziziyah Ridge by nightfall. The Turks were shut off from escape to the north by the unbridged river; east and south the two brigades penned them in, and the cavalry lay to the west. About 3 A.M. on the 29th an attempt was made to break through to the west, but in two hours the concentrated fire of machine guns and field guns had beaten it off. A handful of

cavalry swam the river, and a few infantry also escaped. The 12th Brigade opened the day with a heavy attack against the last defences on the west, and the 39th Garhwalis crowned a brilliant assault by rushing the bridge by which all transport must pass to the west. A heavy bombardment was opened on the main position. But the end had come. To the cavalry watching the battle from the Turks' right rear it seemed that the crisis had arrived. Dense masses of troops were seen to be approaching the British trenches. But soon white flags appeared. It was a general surrender. Ahmed Bey, who had commanded the Euphrates force from March 1915, and 3,545 prisoners were taken. And besides these were 13 guns, 10 machine guns, 1,061 rifles, barges, and much other war material. It was one of the most complete victories of the whole of the campaign in Mesopotamia.

### XIII. THE FALL OF RIGA.

THE debacle on the Southern front sobered Russia for the moment. But the country was distracted by too many ills. Early in the history of the Revolution centrifugal forces had manifested themselves, and as the Socialists had made the demand for self-determination their own, they could not logically object when Esthonia, Lithuania, Finland, the Ukraine, Georgia, and Siberia claimed their independence. To admit these claims was to assist disruption, yet the Socialists saw compromise as their only chance. It was the separatist claim which drew Kerensky to Kiev when Lenin attempted his August revolution; and when the claim was admitted the Cadet Ministers resigned from the Provisional Government. This was the day before Lenin struck. Kerensky hastened back, and took the helm of the new Government on 17th July, and on 2nd August Korniloff was named Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies. Ruzsky and Gourko had been dismissed some time previously, Denikin succeeding the latter in command of the Central (or Western) Armies.

Kerensky attempted to seat himself more firmly in his new position by summoning a conference at Moscow. His attitude on this occasion laid the foundation of his future overthrow. He attempted to prevent Korniloff addressing the meeting; but the General insisted, called attention to the gravity of the situation, and outlined certain disciplinary measures for the protection of the country. General Kaledin, recently elected, though much against his will, Ataman of the Cossacks, supported Korniloff when Kerensky stated rather too pointedly that the Government would not allow themselves to be dictated to by any one. Later on, when the Cossacks could have saved Kerensky, they remembered this incident, and refused to help him.

Korniloff had spoken of the danger of Riga, and the justice of his warning was proved all too soon. In the last week of August General von Hutier, the new commander of the 7th German Army, began an attack on the 12th Army, under Parski, which was destined to capture Riga. Hutier first moved his left wing towards the Gulf of Riga, where the Russians held a strip of territory on the southern shores, and then, by a secret approach, which he was to repeat with greater success on the Western front, he suddenly crossed the Dvina in great strength some twenty miles below Riga. On 2nd September he was across the Riga-Dvinsk railway, and rapidly approaching Parski's line of retreat. Surprise and wavering put an



end to any plan of defence, and, despite the heroic rearguard actions of some "battalions of death," the Russians evacuated Riga on the 3rd, and Hutier entered the city, capturing great quantities of stores and material. So rapidly had verification succeeded prediction that many people showed a tendency to accuse Korniloff of having betrayed the city.\*

But this was grossly unfair to one of the most tragic figures of the Revolution. While Alexeieff was hastening to the Riga sector to restore a front between the Germans and Petrograd, Kerensky, through Savinkov, the Minister of War, began to arrange for the defence of the Government against a new rising of the Bolsheviki. Korniloff was to send two dependable cavalry corps towards Petrograd, to be ready in case of need. Lvov, the former Procurator of the Holy Synod, visited Mogileff on 7th September, and stating that he came from Kerensky, discussed the reorganisation of the Government. Kerensky, he said, was willing to resign if he had not the requisite support, and when the question of a dictatorship arose he suggested that Korniloff should be appointed. Korniloff in the presence of witnesses then resumed the conversation and the conclusions, and on the following day drew up a scheme for the "Council of National Defence," placing the dictatorship in commission, with himself as President, Kerensky vice-President, and Alexeieff, Kolchak, Savinkov, and Philonenko as advisers.

Korniloff in acting in this manner was in perfectly good faith, patriotic and disinterested, and he felt that he had the assent of Kerensky. But on the following day a telephone message from Kerensky proved that the two men were at cross purposes. Kerensky promised to visit Mogileff on the 9th. But instead of this he ordered Korniloff to hand over the command first to Lukomsky and then to Klembovsky. Neither would take the position, so Korniloff remained in command, and was the next day branded as a traitor. General Krymoff, with the 3rd Cavalry Corps, marched towards Petrograd as before arranged; but judging himself betrayed, shot himself. Red Guards, under Tchémov, conquered the cavalry corps by words, spreading the report that Korniloff was a traitor, and intended to fight against the Revolution. Korniloff on the 15th handed over his sword to Alexeieff, and passed off the stage—an honourable and gallant man, who of all those concerned in the episode was the most beyond reproach. Kerensky at least changed his mind, and denied his share in the bargain. Exactly how much it was time will show.

In the second week of October the Germans, with the co-operation of the fleet, cleared Moon and Dago Islands, and on the 21st landed on the Esthonian coast. Meanwhile Kerensky's days of rule were coming to an end. Russia as a military member of the Alliance was already disregarded, and the Austro-Germans were about to make their fresh attempts to deal with the Allies on the west and south-west.

#### XIV. THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES: ANTICLIMAX.

THE last days of September saw a renewal of the German counter-attacks against the new Allied positions east of Ypres, several being made with great force, but with no success. Nine were made in the two last days of September, but they

\* Ludendorff states that he had long intended to attack the Dvinsk front, but had been prevented by the stress of the Western offensive.

were fruitful only in German losses. During September the British had captured 5,296 prisoners, including 146 officers, 11 guns, 57 trench mortars, and 377 machine guns. The captures were small, but they represented a considerable total loss, and the effects of an almost intolerable strain. The plight of the German soldiers was described in numerous messages in the German press. One alone may be taken as a sample. It was written by the military critic who, in August 1914, was occupying his spare moments in the production of a time-table for the capture of Calais and London. In the *Berliner Tageblatt* (8th October) General Baron von Ardenne writes: "The munition columns have to bring up the necessary supplies to near the battery positions from dépôts far in the rear, and can only work by night. All lines of communication are under heavy fire. The columns often have to break up, and the wagons find their way one by one through the holes and swamps. A wave of gas often floods the whole district, and makes it necessary to put on the cumbersome gas masks. Some teams are killed, others rush away in wild terror. Overturned vehicles have to be put on their wheels again, the scattered contents collected, and new teams brought up from the rear before the goal can be reached. The return journey when day comes brings still greater dangers. This has now been going on for months."

This torture and strain, it must be admitted, was nobly borne by the German troops of the 4th Army, under General Sixt von Armin. But the pressure was not relaxed. The strain was continued. Just a week later Sir Douglas Haig struck once more. The front of the attack on this occasion was the eight miles from Tower Hamlets to the Ypres-Staden railway. The battle took place under strange circumstances. It was clear to the German command that the next blow would be directed towards the centre of the ridge, the Broodseinde cross-roads, and an attempt was made to forestall the attack. Five new divisions were brought up, one being the 4th Guard, and three were concentrated for a great counter-attack at 6.10 A.M. on 4th October. Their general aim was the recovery of Zonnebeke and the pressing back of the line westwards. The weather had broken once more. The night was rainy and windy, and the Germans were making the last preparations for their advance, when at six o'clock the British attacked.

Part of the struggle which followed seems to have been of the nature of an encounter battle. The troops met in No Man's Land, and the fight under such conditions naturally went to the British. Their barrage cut off the packed trenches and shell-holes, and fell on the men assembled for the assault. All reports attest the magnitude of the German losses. The ground was heavy and the advance difficult, but everywhere rapid progress was made, and at the end of the day Broodseinde with its cross-roads, and the main ridge to a point 1,000 yards farther north, were in British hands. Far away in the distance could be seen the tower of Bruges, a ready witness of the value of the new ground.

The troops engaged included English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish battalions, as well as four divisions of Australian and New Zealand soldiers; and among the English troops were representatives of twenty-eight English counties. The Ypres-Menin road cut through the right flank of the advance. North of it, English and Scots troops of the 5th Regular Division captured the hamlet of Polderhoek and Polderhoek Château, while the 21st Division occupied Reutel, and the Surreys, Staffords, Devons, Gordons, and Borderers fought their way over the crest of the ridge into the village of Noordemdhock. To the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions fell, after a



magnificent advance, Broodseinde and Molenaarelsthoeck, and they found themselves looking down into country which had been unknown to British eyes since 1914. The New Zealanders captured Gravenstafel and the low spur known as Abraham Heights. On their left lay the marshy area of the Stroombeek; but it did not prevent the 33rd Brigade of the 11th Division capturing the fortified position called Wellington Farm, and, with the assistance of tanks, the western part of Poelcapelle village. The left flank was held up by the Guards, who had to operate in the marshy area below the railway embankment.

A thrill of victory surrounded this successful battle, in which the troops had accomplished their tasks with the greatest precision. In two bounds they had seized the bulk of the main part of the ridge, and the German *communiqué*, which stated that the objectives were "doubtless" distant, merely testifies to the weight of the attack. Documents captured in the battle proved that the Germans recognised that the new defensive system had failed, and they were endeavouring to revert to the old practice of holding their forward positions in strength.

The Australians found themselves with a visible and indisputable proof of the worth of their success, and it had been taken with comparatively light casualties. The number of prisoners taken amounted to 5,200, including 114 officers.

The counter-attacks were again directed against the positions near the Menin road. In the few hours that remained of daylight after three o'clock six German attacks were delivered, and there was another on the following morning. All that they achieved was the evacuation of the ruins of Polderhoek Château, and a slight dent of the line along the Reutelbeek. But the 5th and 21st Divisions suffered very heavily in these determined assaults. The following days witnessed the consolidation of the new positions, amid the German abortive attempts to retake them. On 7th October a determined attack south of Reutel at dawn was checked by artillery, rifle, and machine-gun fire. During the day the artillery action grew more pronounced over the whole of the Ypres front, and it continued on the following day.

Sir Douglas Haig had already realised that the hopes with which he had begun the battle could never be realised. There are suggestions in his dispatch that he considered the advisability of breaking off the battle. It would have been well if he had done so; but he knew that in a fortnight the French were to strike at Malmaison, and he decided to continue the battle to assist Pétain, and also to cover his concentration for Cambrai. The Flanders campaign had become a diversion, and the subsequent operations were pure anticlimax.

The weather broke about this time. All day on the 8th a storm raged, and the shallow basin west and north-west of Passchendaele, being the natural drainage area of the main part of the ridge, became almost a morass. Over the whole of this front the ground was waterlogged, and imposed upon the attacking troops a handicap which was greater than the art of the soldier could contrive. Yet Sir Douglas Haig struck once more on 9th October, and this time in company with General Anthoine and the French troops. The front of the attack extended from just below Broodseinde to St. Jansbeek, one mile north of Bixschoote. The troops advanced at 5.20 A.M., the Australians being on the right of the attack and the French on the left. Rain was falling as the men advanced, and it fell also after the attack had been made.

On the right the Australians moved down the eastern slopes of the ridge near Broodseinde, and captured the objectives assigned to them. On their right a

Territorial division, comprising the Manchester, East Lancashire, and Lancashire Fusilier regiments, advanced a mile along the ridge towards Passchendaele; and when the village was at length captured, the dead bodies of some of them testified to the impetuosity and success of their attack. The Warwickshires and Yorkshires made a considerable advance between the ridge and Poelcapelle, and the capture of the village was completed. English, Welsh, Irish, and Guard troops on the left, in co-operation with the French, carried the line to the outskirts of Houthulst Forest. Everywhere, despite the bad weather, the positions were maintained and consolidated, except south-east of the Ypres-Staden railway, where the difficulties of transport and reinforcement prevailed upon the local command to withdraw slightly. This readjustment was made under no compulsion, and the battle gave the British 2,100 prisoners, and the French about four hundred.

The rain, which had been falling during and after the attack, continued to turn the area into a swamp during the following day. But the 11th was clear and cold, and on the following morning at 5.30 the British attacked once more. It was only half light, and it had been raining again since midnight. The men were wet and cold, and shivered in the high wind. The front of the attack extended from the Ypres-Roulers railway to the junction with the French south of Houthulst Forest. This, as we have pointed out, includes some of the worst possible ground for any active operations. The mud lay so deep that in some places the men advanced waist-deep in it; and the rain setting in with a heavy persistence in the morning, it was decided not to press the attack any further. On the left of the advance and on the right the objectives seem to have been taken; but in the river of slime in the left centre it was impossible to maintain adequate control, and it would have been folly to press the attack in the face of so grave a handicap. The heavy guns were almost immovable, and the light ones so difficult to steady that accurate ranging was impossible. Even rifles and machine guns had to be wrapped in flannel to prevent their being choked by the mud. Before the attack was abandoned the British had taken over one thousand prisoners, and it is clear from the experiences of the troops that their most formidable enemy was the weather.

This seemed so obvious that most people imagined the Ypres offensive to be over. The campaigning weather had certainly gone for the season, but in the fourth week of the month Sir Douglas Haig struck another blow. The interval since the last attack had seen a great change in the situation in Russia. The Germans had conquered the Russian defences in the Gulf of Riga, and were already landing on the mainland of Esthonia. It was never more imperative than now to maintain the pressure in the West, and on the 22nd the Allies struck once more.

A dense fog hung over the ground when the Allied troops advanced at 5.40 in the morning, and the men had to move forward in water knee-deep or even waist-deep. On this occasion the front of the attack was very small, though the French co-operated in it. The southern defences of Houthulst Forest were captured by Gloucester and Cheshire troops and 16th Sherwood Foresters, in co-operation with the French; while Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex battalions captured a number of strongly-fortified buildings and redoubts on the ridge east of Poelcapelle. Strong counter-attacks succeeded in arresting the advance of the British astride the Ypres-Staden railway, but the Germans were unable to check the Allied progress elsewhere. The weather conditions were again the worst enemy.

By this time the long-continued attacks were beginning to impress the Germans



and even the pro-German neutrals. Every attempt was made to show that the attacks were unproductive and could not be continued. Sometimes the point emphasized was that the rate of advance was so slow that nothing could be achieved before the war came to an end by the exhaustion caused through the submarine sinkings. But this made a significant admission. It tacitly granted that the lines were moving. It abandoned the theory of their invincibility, and shaped policy merely on the rate of change of the lines.

Another subsidiary point upon which the Germans constantly insisted was the costliness of the British offensive. And they were clever enough to issue the statements in neutral papers from which they could then copy them in the German press. One of these inspired statements appearing in the German press reported that the British had lost over half a million men in the Battle of Ypres. These battles were terrible enough without this picturesque exaggeration.

In the British press it was reported that the thanks of the country were to be offered to Sir Douglas Haig, and this seemed to be a sort of official "Amen" to the Ypres offensive. Up to this time it had been in progress for nearly three months. There had been eight distinct battles. Some of them had been promising Allied successes. Many of them had shown a high level of tactical ability on the part of the British and French troops. The new German defensive by means of fortified areas imposed a formidable problem on the Allied command. The small concrete forts—"pill-boxes," as the British familiarly called them—were almost impossible to discover from the sky. The difficulty of dealing with a great number of these formidable obstacles is evident; but the Allied troops soon became expert in isolating the works which escaped the preliminary bombardment, and reduced them with little loss. At certain points of the battle front tanks were used to advantage, but the vast bulk of the work of reduction of these fortified areas was done by the infantry.

Another point which is worthy of note is the speeding up of the attacks. The interval between the different battles was steadily reduced, and the most successful of the engagements—that of 4th October—was fought after only eight days' preparation. Clearly this acceleration in the Allied apparatus of attack represents a great achievement. Mobility is one of the decisive factors of victory, but to make the complicated modern striking apparatus mobile represents a problem which is more easily conceived than solved.

At the end of these battles the bulk of the ridge which commands the Flanders plain was securely in the hands of the Allies. Houthulst Forest had been placed in a salient, with the Allied guns ranged in a rough arc about it. No concentration could take place over the greater part of the Flanders plain without its being discovered from the positions on the ridge. German military writers have described the precision and deadliness of the British artillery before it had the advantage of being directed from positions such as those the British now held on the ridge. What then might be expected as to its precision when directed from such positions? We must visualise the struggle at Ypres as throwing a constantly increasing pressure upon the Germans. If the artillery and aerial bombardment had been bad in August and worse in September, it grew speedily heavier and heavier after 4th October. Yet before Sir Douglas Haig struck once more to astonish friend and foe alike, the whole rhythm of the war had changed. The day after the small attack last described, General Maistre struck a heavy blow towards Laon which speedily achieved

important results. But the world had no time to realise their nature before the Austrians, assisted by the Germans, had struck in the Upper Isonzo and broken through the Italian line. General Pétain had no doubt planned his offensive to offset or possibly forestall the Austro-German offensive which the Allies for about a month had known to be in preparation. But the blow when it came achieved such spectacular results that in the imagination it dwarfed everything else. It was in such an atmosphere that Sir Douglas Haig resumed his offensive on the east of Ypres.

Behind the lines there had been some readjustment. The Canadians had been moved north from their positions about Lens, and now stood on the left flank of the Australians. They were given the post of honour for the new attack which took place over the ground north of the Ypres-Roulers railway, and involved the co-operation of the French. The Canadians were directed along the ridge and against the outlying spurs which jutted out into the swamp like the ground west of Passchendaele. Troops of the 63rd Naval Division and of the 58th London Territorials fought on the left of the Canadians, with West Lancashire and North Country troops between them and the French. To assist the success of the attack an assault was delivered down the Menin road. Just to the north lay Polderhoek Château, a strong point which had changed hands more than once before. It passed finally into British hands now. It had deep and solid cellars, was skilfully tunnelled, and stood on a high spur, with two massive blockhouses guarding its flanks. There was fierce fighting to obtain the secure possession of so valuable a prize.

The staging of this new battle was strange and terrifying. The German shells fell thick and fast into the deep watery mud, sending it splashing high above the men's heads. The higher ground had been drying, but the rain began to fall in the early hours of the 26th, and the advance became heavy everywhere. During the day the rain fell even more heavily; but though it made life almost unbearable, it did not prevent the troops securing their ends. The Canadians secured Bellevue spur west of Passchendaele after a prolonged and obstinate struggle. On the slopes of this spur there were a number of pill-boxes armed with machine guns, and there were numerous strong points also provided with machine guns. At this point, too, the German barrage was unusually well-timed and well-placed. The German troops defending the position were hard-fighting Bavarians, well-set-up men who, with a good resting-place above the swamp, felt themselves secure. Below Bellevue spur runs the Ravebeek, an almost impassable swamp, and on the other side rise the hummock of Crest Farm and the hill of Passchendaele. The positions on these mounds were mutually supporting. Machine-gun fire swept across the slopes of the hills, as the Australians, who had attempted to storm them, found to their cost.

On the right the Canadians moved along the main ridge without much difficulty, though they found their way blocked by heavy fire from the guns which were directed by aeroplanes flying low. The aeroplanes not only used their machine guns, but also signalled through the darkness with flash-lamps. At Bellevue spur the struggle was pitiful and splendid. Dragging themselves out of the slime which seemed to cling to them, the men were slow in moving after their barrage, and came under a murderous fire from the German machine guns in the pill-boxes. A few men did reach the crest of the spur, but the others struggled in the slime and smoke and fog, and it was almost impossible to conquer the hail of bullets in such conditions. The men even fell back a little. The struggle was too hard for flesh and blood to bear. But they



re-formed in the base of the hollow, and began once more with the shepherding barrage in front of them. The little forts at the top of the crest were still intact when the Canadians, dividing into small bodies, rushed the last lap of rising ground and closed in upon the pill-boxes. From this part of the front which was now captured over four hundred men were taken, and when it is remembered that the average garrison of the pill-boxes was about twenty, it will be appreciated how terrible was the problem which the Canadians faced and solved. The first counter-attacks were not launched until 4 P.M. The enemy had to assemble in swamp and bog, and it was realised that to recapture so important a position every effort must be made. The Germans advanced along the northern neck of the spur, but were broken up by the British barrage. During the night the men, undaunted by the terrible shelling, even advanced farther for about three hundred yards and seized the Bellevue cross-roads. The blockhouses there were undefended. The Germans had fled.

The Canadians stuck to their positions in the very worst conditions. Transport could not cope with such ground. Supply columns could not reach the men. Even bearer companies got stuck in the swamp. Ropes were thrown to such men by others on firmer ground; but it can be realised that to supply considerable bodies of men in this way was beyond any organisation. This, of course, affected all the troops. Indeed the conditions under which the Canadians fought their way to the chief success of the day applied to the other troops as well. The naval men had to force the passage of the Paddebeek, an apparently impassable obstacle, covered by a concrete element of the original German defences. Yet the task was accomplished heroically. The French, too, crossed the St. Jansbeek with the water up to their shoulders, and captured the village of Draebank, Papegoed Wood, and 200 prisoners. The British had taken 600. At some points, such as beyond Polderhoek Château, the Germans showed traces of nerves, and directed their artillery upon their own men.

During the week-end the French and Belgians continued their operations, and carried forward their front to the western fringe of Houthulst Forest. The moving line was brought to within three miles of Dixmude, with the capture by the Belgians of Aschhoop. To occupy this village and other adjacent villages the Allies had to cross the inundated area, which for the first time became if anything a little better rather than an infinitely worse fighting area. The depth of advance in this new area was about two miles, and a glance at the map will show its significance. With the captures on Sunday, the number of prisoners taken by the British amounted to 1,200, and the French had taken 400. The battle had been one of the most heroic even in a war of heroic deeds.

It is difficult to place any term to these terrible battles, and the struggle had hardly died down before a fresh wave carried the Allied lines still further towards their goal. At 5.40 in the morning of the 30th the British attacked on a small front between the Ypres-Roulers railway and the Poelcapelle-Westroosebeek road. The two days of interval since the attack which carried the French and Belgians to the western fringes of the Houthulst Forest had been fine and cold, and the attack had the advantage of being launched in fine weather. The Canadians held the right flank, and had for their objective Crest Farm, which lay less than five hundred yards from the heart of Passchendaele. The farm was captured by the 4th Canadian Division in an hour, after a stiff fight, and the troops pressed in to the outskirts of Passchendaele. But about Crest Farm they had to stand against five heavy counter-attacks, and the

first began as early as eight o'clock. Farther west the Canadians and the 63rd Naval Division crossed the swampy ground and captured numerous fortified points.

For the first time for months the German claim that we had reached a definite objective and had been pushed out of it had some colour. They boasted that we had penetrated Passchendaele and had then been ejected. The fact is that the British barrage went across the village and stayed there to prevent the Canadians going beyond their objective, which was the village. The offensive was being conducted in this methodical way. The offensive with limited objectives is at least as old as Clausewitz, and it was almost the only method of reducing the formidable defensive system constructed by the enemy. Yet it must be said that it was not the only way. "What do positions matter?" said the general commanding the troops opposed to the British in this area. The answer was being given at the very moment in Italy, where General von Below's troops, by seizing the positions about Plezzo and Caporetto, were forcing back the whole Italian line into the Italian plain.

There were further small advances in the first days of November, and then at 6 A.M. on the 6th the Canadians captured Passchendaele with the high ground north and north-west, and a number of pill-boxes around Mosselmart. Within three hours 400 prisoners had been taken, and a determined counter-attack had been beaten off. It was the eleventh distinct engagement of the Third Battle of Ypres. Polderhoek Château had been attacked once more, but the position remained in German hands.

Two further attempts were made to clear the whole of the ridge—one on the 10th and the last on the 12th; but the conditions were too terrible for wit or courage to overcome. The battle died down, leaving in the hands of the British 24,065 prisoners, 74 guns, 941 machine guns, and 138 trench mortars. But the total casualties suffered amounted to 246,257, and of this total the Canadian contribution was over twelve thousand. The German casualties were probably not greatly different. But when we make every allowance possible for the postponement of the opening of the Third Battle of Ypres, there is still sufficient evidence to prove that the British had not really come to grips with the German tactics of defence until 20th September. It was almost too late even then to achieve a strategic success in this area, and yet the British command had not sufficient mobility to abandon their plan and use their remaining reserves elsewhere.

By the time that the battle was over the interest was painfully concentrated upon Italy, and the success so far of the Battle of Cambrai did not distract it. In our preoccupation with the heroism and sufferings of the troops it is easy to forget that the Germans suffered still more. Of this campaign Ludendorff wrote, "The fighting on the Western front became more severe and costly than any the German army had yet experienced." \* "Our wastage had been so high as to cause grave misgivings, and had exceeded all expectations." † The more critical handicap of the British was that, unable to allow the enemy to rest because of the weakness of the French, the Russians, and the Italians, they had not the mobility to change the point of their attack to an easier area.

\* *My Memories*, p. 476.

† *Ibid.*, 480.



## XV. THE SECOND PEACE MOVEMENT.

TOWARDS the end of spring 1917 the world began to witness the evidences of a certain restiveness among the Central Powers. Despite the severity of the censorship, it was impossible not to recognise that a political crisis of greater or less gravity was taking place, and the actual effects were soon observed to be greater in Germany than in Austria-Hungary. Some part of the movement was no doubt due to the repercussion of the memorable events in Russia. Russia had, at one blow, cut herself free from the shackles of absolutism, and was at once in the front rank of self-governing nations. Indeed, as time went on, it seemed impossible that New Russia would bear any bondage, even that necessary subordination of the claims of the individual to those of the general community. Some reaction was bound to take place in the neighbouring countries, and there can be no doubt that the radical groups in Germany and Austria-Hungary were much affected by the Revolution. At first Germany was so busy endeavouring to profit by the change that less attention was paid to its nature and final implications. At a stroke the great argument which Germany had levelled at the Allies was gone. No longer could she sneer at the idealism that inspired the Allied cause by pointing to the absolutism of Russia, to which the Western democracies were bound.

But this was rather the governmental attitude towards the Revolution, and did not in any sense represent the feeling of the people. Another of the factors which became strongly operative in the spring was the undisguised longing of Austria-Hungary for peace and the *rapprochement* between the Dual Monarchy and Bavaria. One of the evil fruits of Germany's militarist domination over her ally was a feeling of resentment, fundamentally unjust indeed, but not the less real. Austria-Hungary was the original cause of the war, since it was she who wished to chastise, if not absorb, Servia as she had absorbed Bosnia; and it was solely because Austria-Hungary had not lost the habit of being defeated that Germany had to come to her assistance. Where Germany sent soldiers she could hardly be expected not to send generals too; and the subjection of Austria-Hungary, begun early in 1915, was consummated under Ludendorff. The Emperor Karl was a young man who naturally sympathised with his people's resentment at the humiliation of their position, and the Austro-Hungarians did not take kindly to the scheme for a middle Europe. Indeed the grand dream of that brilliant writer Naumann seems to have never passed the threshold of imagination. People saw in it a scheme by which the subordinate position of Austria-Hungary, born of the war, should be established for all time. Naumann lamented openly, time and again, that nothing was being done to realise his great scheme. And this sense of resentment fell on a people enduring an almost intolerable strain. Austria-Hungary was, apart from Turkey the only one of the Kaiser's allies whose territory was invaded. The whole of Bukovina and part of Eastern Galicia were, until the autumn, in the hands of Russia; and the occupation of other territories could not be taken as an offset to this humiliation. Furthermore, Austria-Hungary had suffered, with the sole exception of France, more than any other belligerent nation. She had lost very heavily, and her internal position was almost as bad as it could be. Her openly confessed need was peace, and the Allies strengthened the peace movement by conciliatory statements. The emperor was sufficiently wise to see that dismemberment could not be avoided if he

persisted in governing subject races according to the old rules of a victorious power; and although he met the strongest opposition from his own people in his schemes of devolution, his will was plainly bent on concessions. Austria-Hungary, moreover, was a great Catholic power, and since there was a feeling of resentment in Catholic Bavaria, it is natural that the two States should draw together. Both of them felt that the German Government was continuing the war for its own interests. If any one gained by the war, it would not be Austria-Hungary or Bavaria. Whereas the *status quo* would satisfy them, it was felt that Germany demanded much more.

It was obvious that Austria-Hungary and Bavaria were drawing together, and the bond that united them was the desire for peace. The development of affairs was carried a step further when Scheidemann, the German Majority Socialist, returned from Stockholm. Apparently he there gained enlightenment. It had already been confessed by the "candid friend" of the enemy, Harden, that the whole world was united against Germany and looked upon her with detestation. Scheidemann seems to have discovered that not only did the world detest Germany, but it also regarded her as an effete and out-of-date people. This was a more searching charge. The Germans had, for half a century, been living on the fear which they inspired in other nations. They regarded it rather as a compliment, a tribute to their strength and power. But to be contemned as out of touch with the modern world, as an insufficiently developed people, unfit because undesirous of self-government—this was not to be tolerated. Accordingly Scheidemann returned to Berlin with a cry for democratisation. Without this change he felt convinced, he said, that Germany could not have peace. After this episode the movement seemed to outsiders to die down. The more significant news did not penetrate to the outside world. There were rumours of strikes, and reports that Turkish troops were employed in putting them down. There was, of course, widespread distress, and the decreased ration of bread made a severe strain on people's endurance, and the heavy German losses in the Allies' spring offensive falling upon such soil, produced underneath the surface a strong desire for peace.

Things came to a head towards the end of June. There had been two smashing British attacks—one on Vimy Ridge, and the other on Messines Ridge; and the French had seized all the heights above the Aisne. The unrestricted submarine campaign had been in action for five months, and yet the Allies were delivering heavy blows against the German troops, as though no such campaign were in progress. In the *Memoirs* of Mr. Gerard, published a little later, the wild hopes built upon the submarines were disclosed. Mr. Gerard was assured that the war would be ended by its means in "two months." Another and apparently more cautious opinion asked for "three months." Boasts and promises of this sort had been made to the German people; and when a month had run, the Admiralty had said that the campaign had been successful beyond all their hopes. So sure had been the Government that the campaign was the key to the situation, and would achieve "its purpose in the shortest possible time," that the German people were promised that America would not come in; and even if she did, she would not be able to help the Allies before the end came. After five months all the promises had proved to be illusory. The Allies were not only not suing for peace; they were making war with deadly determination. Already America was organising, and on 26th June the first American contingents arrived in France. Despite the submarine campaign, despite organised attacks on the expedition—some of them apparently directed



by treachery—the American soldiers had crossed the Atlantic and arrived safely in France. Many of the leading Germans realised that they had been misled, and attacks began to be made upon the Chancellor from all sides. The Pan-Germans had always been against him. Indeed Tirpitz was thought to be eager to fill his place, and clearly he had gained the day when the unrestricted submarine campaign was initiated. But now the moderates who had formed his chief mainstay turned against him, and an attack was made upon him by an organised body of opinion, headed by Herr Erzberger.

Erzberger was a Catholic deputy, and had recently had an interview with the Emperor of Austria. The Catholic body in the Reichstag was the largest single party, and it may be said that its vote would carry any question. The point of the attack seems first to have been merely the widespread dissatisfaction with the Chancellor's policy; but little by little other grievances were added to the general indictment, and the world witnessed the dumb show of a great political crisis. There were all sorts of consultations. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were called to Berlin, and their appearance was significant. They came not only to reassure the doubting, but with an unexpressed hint as to where the real power lay. They interviewed the heads of parties, as did also the Crown Prince and the Chancellor. A Crown Council was held on 9th July, and sat from eight to eleven. The Kaiser, the Chancellor, the Imperial and Prussian Ministers, were present. The following day the Chancellor had a long audience with the Kaiser, and then with the leaders of the parties. He had advocated immediate reform on the lines of the vague promises recently made. But the crisis continued. The Reichstag refused to pass the votes of credit. The Bavarian premier, Count von Hertling, another of the Emperor Karl's frequent visitors, was summoned to Berlin. It is stated that he was offered and refused the Chancellorship.

So far as one can read the changing scene, the real position was that the Centre Catholic party wished for peace, and were determined to press the democratic movement to the point at which they might control the broad lines of the foreign policy in order to obtain peace. Further than that they did not wish to go. They enjoyed already more power than they could hope to have under a reformed franchise. The Conservatives did not wish peace except on Pan-German lines, and the Left wished both peace and a democratic franchise and forms. The common factor of the majority was peace, and they speedily found an expression for their aspirations. In the face of this, and the almost universal lack of confidence in him, the Chancellor fell, and Herr Michaelis, the former Prussian Food Controller, was appointed Chancellor. He was simply a bureaucrat, an unknown man who was supposed to be efficient and reliable. He was colourless, and was probably selected for that reason. He made his first speech to the Reichstag on 19th July, and the speech was memorable for its ambiguity. Indeed, now that the majority had gained its way, or the first part of it, it seems to have lost interest or hope. The majority had agreed on a resolution in the following terms: "As on August 4, 1914, so on the threshold of the fourth year of the war, the word of the Speech from the Throne holds good for the German people. We are not impelled by lust of conquest. For the defence of her freedom and independence, for the integrity of her territorial possessions, Germany took up arms. The Reichstag strives for a peace of understanding and the permanent reconciliation of peoples. With such a peace, forced acquisitions of territory and political, economic, or financial oppressions are inconsistent. The

Reichstag also rejects all schemes which aim at economic barriers and hostility between the peoples after the war. The freedom of the sea must be ensured. Only economic peace will prepare the ground for a friendly intercourse between nations. The Reichstag will actively promote the creation of international law organisations. So long, however, as the enemy Governments do not accept such a peace, so long as they threaten Germany and her allies with conquests and oppression, the German nation will stand together like one man, and unshakably hold out and fight until its own and its allies' right to life and development is secured. The German nation is invincible in its unity. The Reichstag knows that it is at one in this statement with the men who in heroic fights are defending the Fatherland. The imperishable gratitude of the whole people is assured to them."

This resolution was read out at the end of the new Chancellor's speech, which was a commentary on the views of the majority. "What we wish principally to do is to conclude peace as men who had successfully carried out their purpose," and this was said to be in conformity with the majority resolution, "*so far as I understand it.*" This ambiguous phrase and the whole tone of the speech led to much comment. In the Allied countries it was felt that the whole episode was staged; that if it were not, the majority, at any rate, were far from representing the springs of power. Michaelis spoke in intentionally ambiguous terms in order that he could suit his actual terms to whatever situation should arise. It was rumoured that Fehrenbach, who read the resolution in the Reichstag, had declared that it was only a formula arranged to secure the passing of the credits. Part of its terminology came from the Russian revolutionary statements. "No annexation and no indemnities" had been their cry; but as they had lost more land than they held, and were desirous of peace almost at any price, their formula could not be received by the Allies without some reservations. If there were to be no indemnities, at least there ought to be compensation for such territory as occupied Belgium, which had been ruthlessly pillaged. But other parts of the majority resolution came from another of the factors which had produced the agitation for peace. The German manufacturers, and also the more far-sighted of the Junker class, saw bankruptcy and possibly revolution staring them in the face on the conclusion of peace unless they could at once secure a sufficiency of raw material on good terms. The German exchange was down by nearly 50 per cent., and if they were to pay a shilling for every sixpennyworth of goods which were already at tremendously swollen prices, they could not possibly get sufficient to tide over the terrible discontent after the war. How much worse would be their case if the world, now arrayed against them, determined upon a commercial boycott?

The war map was more a specious document than a true account of things. In any case, Germany had lost all her colonies, except a fever-ridden swamp in East Africa, and this, so far as mere territory goes, would more than offset the land occupied in Europe. What there was in difference of value would be a small price to pay for accommodation with raw material on good terms after the war. Without such an arrangement Germany would be ruined, even if she could hold Belgium and all the rest of the occupied territory. And, moreover, this was a depreciating security, for, apart from Russia, Germany had not gained a victory since 1915, while the Allies were dealing heavy blows against her best troops without cessation. In a sense, then, the economic grip of the Allies was the paramount question; while of course it is clear that while the war offered chances, the military



would insist that they could *force* what they wanted as the price of peace from the Allies.

The world received the majority peace resolution with suspicion. Mr. Lloyd George suggested very clearly that he did not believe in its *bona fides*. And the controversy in the German press was a revelation to all who had tended to treat it as a valid and valuable pronouncement. The Pan-Germans fathered it, a little gingerly at first ; but when they found it amenable, with more confidence and congratulations. The Centre and Socialists retorted, and were at length driven to attack the Chancellor for making a pronouncement which was so ambiguous. At first he attempted to brazen it out, and said he had never pledged himself. But on the following day he was sufficiently wise to change his mind, and apparently agree without any reservation. The German people had expected, if not some immediate reform of the franchise in accordance with the Kaiser's rescript of 11th July, at least an approach to Parliamentary government. Michaelis made a belated attempt to meet the demand by forming a Committee of seven members of the Reichstag with seven of the Bundesrat. But this, again, could be made a mere show of power. With the casting vote in his hand, and the seven members of the Bundesrat to depend upon, he could always rule as before, arbitrarily. The Reichstag representatives were to be heads of the parties, and were to keep in touch with these parties. In this way Michaelis could avoid crises by sifting the views of the Reichstag through their seven representatives, and steering a safe course either by choosing a programme which would split them or by cutting down their demands. The committee offered a safety valve and a sort of gag ; for where a vast body of men cannot be gagged, seven are reasonably easy to silence, especially with a people so docile and open to reactionary appeals as the Germans.

But in the meantime another significant event had taken place. The Pope on 1st August issued an appeal to all the belligerent peoples. It was not published till 15th August, and the first summaries did not seem to suggest that it was a document which was likely to lead to any change. The tone, so it seemed, indicated that it was inspired by the Central Powers. It at any rate presumed a deadlock, which the Allies were far from admitting ; and at once it became reported that the Emperor of Austria-Hungary and Erzberger were behind it. To take this point of view is scarcely justified. There can be little doubt that the Catholics of the Central Powers had done what they could. The Central Powers could only lose from a prolongation of the war. It was to their advantage that the war should end ; and there were the other reasons which have already been suggested. But there can be little doubt that the Pope sounded all the belligerents before presenting the Note ; and the terms of it, studiously left vague, but presumably suggesting merely a programme of the necessary admissions preliminary to the opening of negotiations, were such as almost all thoughtful people would have accepted if they could have had any faith in Germany's word. There lay the horrible payment of all her loud disclaimers of the responsibilities attaching to contracts signed and sealed by her. It was presumably this which led to the tone of the press in dealing with the Note. The British Press, acting on suggestions from above, dismissed the Note with more or less courtesy, according to the natural temper of its editorial control. The *Manchester Guardian*, with a more than usual cavalier manner, drew down protests from numbers of its readers, and in particular from the Bishop of Salford, who suggested that it was really the *Punica fides*, the suspicion that must ever cling to the word of the German

Government, which prevented us from opening negotiations, and President Wilson's reply clearly made the same point.

The actual terms of the Papal Note are worthy of careful study, and the more important parts of it must be put on record: "Since the beginning of our Pontificate," it began, "amid the horrors of the terrible war let loose on Europe, we have kept in mind three things above all—to maintain perfect impartiality towards all the belligerents, as becomes him who is the common father and who loves with equal affection all his children; to strive constantly to do all the greatest possible good, without distinction of nationality or religion, as is enjoined upon us both by the universal law of charity and by the supreme spiritual charge confided to us by Christ; finally, as our pacifying mission equally requires, to omit nothing, as far as might be in our power, that could hasten the end of this calamity by essaying to bring the peoples and their heads to more moderate counsels and to the serene deliberations of peace—a peace just and lasting."

The Pope went on to point out that he had frequently made attempts to achieve this end; and there can be no doubt that when the full diplomatic history of the war is known, there will be seen how fully this statement is justified. He then proceeded:—

"Towards the end of the first year of the war we addressed to the nations in conflict the liveliest exhortations, and pointed out moreover the path along which a peace, stable and honourable for all, might be attained. Unfortunately, our appeal was not heeded, and the war went on desperately, with all its horrors, for another two years; it even became more cruel, and spread on land and sea—nay, in the very air—upon defenceless cities, quiet villages and their innocent inhabitants, desolation and death were seen to fall. And now none can imagine how the sufferings of all would be increased and intensified were yet other months, or still worse other years, added to this bloody triennium. Shall then the civilised world be nought but a field of death? And shall Europe, so glorious and flourishing, rush, as though driven by universal madness, towards the abyss and lend her hand to her own suicide?"

The Pope then proceeded to make definite suggestions, prefacing the remark that he is merely suggesting the "bases," leaving to the Governments concerned their "completion and more precise definition." "First, the fundamental point should be that the moral force of right should replace the material force of arms; hence a just agreement between all for the simultaneous and reciprocal diminution of armaments, according to rules and guarantees to be established, to the extent necessary and sufficient for the maintenance of public order in each State; then in the place of armies the establishment of arbitration, with its exalted pacifying function, on lines to be concerted and with sanctions to be settled against any State which should refuse either to submit international questions to arbitration or accept its awards."

This suggestion indicates the creation of a League of Nations and an International Order, backed by force. Bethmann Hollweg had even gone so far as to agree to this suggestion; but he amended it by the addition, "we should even be glad to put ourselves at the head of it." Arbitration had been consistently refused by Germany, not only at the meetings of the Hague Convention, but also immediately before the war. The next paragraph came in for more than its share of misunderstanding. And it will be necessary to italicise the points which were so frequently overlooked. "*The supremacy of right once established*, let every obstacle be removed



from the channels of communication between peoples, by ensuring, *under rules likewise to be laid down*, the true freedom and common enjoyment of the seas. . . .” Militarism was first to be removed, arbitration installed, as the usual apparatus for settling disputes, and then, *and only then*, was navalism to be removed. The next paragraph was more provocative from the Allied point of view, and we see no way to interpret it that does not place the Allies’ case on much the same footing as the German.

“As to the reparation of damage and to the costs of the war, we see no way to solve the question save by laying down, as a general principle, complete and reciprocal condonation, which would moreover be justified by the immense benefits which would accrue from disarmament; all the more, since the continuation of such carnage, solely for economic reasons, would be incomprehensible. If in certain cases there exist, nevertheless, special reasons, let them be weighed with justice and equity.

“But these pacific agreements, with the immense advantages they entail, are impossible without the reciprocal restitution of territories now occupied. Consequently, on the part of Germany, there must be the complete evacuation of Belgium, with a guarantee of her full political, military, and economic independence towards all Powers whatsoever; likewise the evacuation of French territory. On the part of the other belligerent parties, there must be a similar restitution of the German colonies.

“As regards territorial questions, like those at issue between Italy and Austria, and between Germany and France, there is reason to hope that, in consideration of the immense advantages of a lasting peace with disarmament, the parties in conflict will examine them in a conciliatory spirit, taking account, in the measure of what is just and possible, as we have before said, of the aspirations of the peoples, and, as occasion may offer, co-ordinating particular interests with the general weal of the great human society.

“The same spirit of equity and justice must reign in the study of the other territorial and political questions, notably those relating to Armenia, the Balkan States, and to the territories forming part of the ancient kingdom of Poland. . . .”

The Note was first acknowledged by Great Britain, and the acknowledgment was courteous and well-worded; but the United States was the first nation to answer it. There was probably a tactical reason for this. The United States was at war with Germany, and yet was not technically an ally of Great Britain, France, and Russia. While she concerted war measures with the Allies, she kept a free hand as to diplomacy. She did not enter the war as a lucrative engagement, but from the highest motives of disinterestedness. And being in the war, she was not going to wage it for any predatory or imperialist aims, but simply for the re-establishment of the world’s peace. The economic decisions of the Paris Conference still held the ground, and the world was confronted by the prospect of a war after the war—a prospect which, as we have seen, was the most terrifying to the more thoughtful of the German people. Mr. Wilson’s Note, from his unique position of a detached ally, served to weaken the hand of those among the Allies who looked forward to this war after the war; and it further nailed the old and original ideals more firmly to the mast than ever, at the same time that it struck a perfectly clear and unambiguous note of hostility to the Prussian Government. It did even more. The spirits of all people were wearying and drooping under the terrible burdens of the war, and like those who had started out with the full determination to defeat the

Prussian military machine, were now tending to question whether some compromise might not be made. There was a feeling that peace might come during the year. The Russians were whole-heartedly in favour of it, and vague but optimistic hopes were built upon the Stockholm Conference. It was in this mood, a slightly relaxed state when the dominant feeling was a wonder whether peace might be attained by some formula, that the Note of Mr. Wilson was delivered to the Pope and published. It was clear as a clarion and as stimulating, and its terms had all that rare quality which the world had become accustomed to in the President's words, however unfamiliar they might seem to those conversant with the cynical and insincere language of diplomacy. It deserves to be put on record as an enduring testimony to the world's debt to the United States, and the more important passages must be given. It will be noticed that, in spite of its idealism, the Note is as practical as it could be made. Indeed it has a perfectly business-like ring about it. After the usual complimentary preliminary phrases, the Note continues :—

" Our response must be based upon the stern facts, and upon nothing else. It is not a mere cessation of arms he desires. It is a stable and enduring peace. This agony must not be gone through with again, and it must be a matter of very sober judgment what will ensure us against it.

" His Holiness, in substance, proposes that we return to the *status quo ante bellum*, and that then there can be a general condonation, disarmament, and a concert of nations based upon an acceptance of the principle of arbitration, that by a similar concert freedom of the seas be established, and that the territorial claims of France and Italy, the perplexing problems of the Balkan States, and the restitution of Poland be left to such conciliatory adjustments as may be possible in the new temper of such a peace, due regard being paid to the aspirations of the peoples whose political fortunes and affiliations will be involved.

" It is manifest that no part of this programme can be successfully carried out unless the restitution of the *status quo ante* furnishes a firm and satisfactory basis for it. The object of this war is to deliver the free peoples of the world from the menace and the actual power of a vast military establishment controlled by an irresponsible Government, which, having secretly planned to dominate the world, proceeded to carry out the plan without regard either to the sacred obligations of treaty or the long-established practices and long-cherished principles of international action and honour, which chose its own time for the war, delivered its blow fiercely and suddenly, stopped at no barrier either of law or of mercy, swept a whole continent within the tide of blood—not the blood of soldiers only, but the blood of innocent women and children also, and of the helpless poor—and now stands baulked but not defeated—the enemy of four-fifths of the world. . . .

" To deal with such a Power by way of peace upon the plan proposed by his Holiness the Pope would, so far as we can see, involve a recuperation of its strength and a renewal of its policy which would make it necessary to create a permanent hostile combination of the nations against the German people who are its instruments; would result in abandoning the new-born Russia to the intrigue, the manifold subtle interference, and the certain counter-revolution which would be attempted by all the malign influences to which the German Government has of late accustomed the world.

" Can peace be based upon a restitution of its power, or upon any word of honour it could pledge in a treaty of settlement and accommodation ?

" Responsible statesmen must now everywhere see, if they never saw before,



that no peace can rest securely upon political or economic restrictions meant to benefit some nations and cripple or embarrass others, upon vindictive action of any sort, or any kind of revenge or deliberate injury. The American people have suffered intolerable wrongs at the hands of the Imperial German Government, but they desire no reprisal upon the German people, who have themselves suffered all things in this war which they did not choose.

"They believe that peace should rest upon the rights of peoples, not the rights of governments—the rights of peoples great or small, weak or powerful, their equal right to freedom and security and self-government, and to a participation upon fair terms in the economic opportunities of the world, the German people of course included, if they will accept equality and not seek domination.

"The test, therefore, of every plan of peace is this: Is it based upon the faith of all the peoples involved, or merely upon the word of an ambitious and intriguing Government on the one hand, and of a group of free peoples on the other? This is a test which goes to the root of the matter, and it is the test which must be applied. The purposes of the United States in this war are known to the whole world—to every people to whom the truth has been permitted to come. They do not need to be stated again. We seek no material advantage of any kind. We believe that the intolerable wrongs done in this war by the furious and brutal power of the Imperial German Government ought to be repaired, but not at the expense of the sovereignty of any people—rather in vindication of the sovereignty both of those that are weak and those that are strong.

"Punitive damages, the dismemberment of empires, the establishment of selfish and exclusive economic leagues, we deem inexpedient, and in the end worse than futile—no proper basis for a peace of any kind, least of all for an enduring peace. That must be based upon justice and fairness, and the common rights of mankind.

"We cannot take the word of the present rulers of Germany as a guarantee of anything that is to endure, unless explicitly supported by such conclusive evidence of the will and purpose of the German people themselves as the other peoples of the world would be justified in accepting. Without such guarantees, treaties of settlement, agreements for disarmament, covenants to set up arbitration in the place of force, territorial adjustments and constitutions of small nations, if made with the German Government, no man, no nation could now depend on. We must await some new evidence of the purposes of the great peoples of the German Empires. God grant it may be given soon, and in a way to restore the confidence of all peoples everywhere in the faith of the nations and the possibility of a covenanted peace."

The Note was signed by Mr. Lansing, Secretary of State, a point which the Vatican organ, the *Osservatore Romano*, commented upon unfavourably. But presumably the unfavourableness of the comment was chiefly due to the fact that the Note very clearly closed the door to the initiation of peace in the near future. The bulk of the German newspapers treated such extracts as were permitted to penetrate to the people as mere insolence; but there cannot be any doubt that it was not without its effect. The other replies to the Pope's Note cease to have interest in the face of Mr. Wilson's answer. They came as an anticlimax. It was realised more firmly than ever that the world could only have peace as the price of a distinct and clear military victory over the German armies. By that alone could Prussian militarism—which, as Mr. Wilson had justly said, had planned to dominate the world—be finally conquered.

## BOOK VI.

### ITALY'S DARKEST HOUR (October 1917-March 1918).

THE phase which began with the Austro-German attack on the Isonzo line brought many surprises to a world surfeited with sensations. The collapse and most gallant recovery of Italy was the chief of these ; but at the most critical hour of the campaign Haig launched his long-prepared attack at Cambrai, which, despite its inconclusive result, had an immediate success sufficient to suggest what might have been achieved if five splendid divisions had not been moved from Haig's command at a moment's notice. But the swiftness and strength of the counter-attack showed the disagreeable possibilities of the final defection of Russia, which was complete in the first days of March. Allenby was sweeping all before him in Palestine, and Van Deventer had pushed the Germans out of the territory of their great East African colony. But the smallness of the effect upon the main issues of the war of these significant successes proved how idle were the dreams of those who were enamoured of "Easternism." Ludendorff was preparing a great blow in the West, which, if successful, would have written off the Eastern successes or left the Allies to barter their blockade and captured territories for a peace of compromise.

In her peace with Russia and Rumania Germany sealed her own doom. A statesman might have saved Germany and the world from bitter suffering. Outside Germany no one could help. Her will was irrevocably set for victory. All approaches from without would have been used to secure the spoils if not the name of victory. France from bitter experience knew this too well, and determined to abide the issue.

#### I. CAPORETTO TO THE PIAVE.

THE eyes of the world were focused on the Western front, on the desperate struggle for the ridge beyond Ypres and the new French attack beyond the Aisne, when suddenly these operations paled to insignificance in the light of the sudden onslaught on the Italian Isonzo lines on 24th October. For a day or two the reports were arresting and disturbing. Thenceforward they became definitely alarming, and no one who sympathised with the Allies could withdraw his mind from a painful preoccupation with the tragic drama which was being enacted upon the Italian front. It was almost two months before it became certain that the enemy had again won every success except the only success that mattered.

General Cadorna had been conscious that he could not press his summer offensive to a decisively victorious conclusion without reinforcements in men and material. But the Allies had been unable to send men, and hence the Italian Commander-



in-Chief found himself obliged to break off his offensive just when it began to offer the widest possibilities. All told, the casualties of the year, including cases of sickness, had reached a total of nearly 800,000; and Cadorna saw himself in mid-September not only obliged to cease his pressure, but even faced with the possibility of a counter-offensive under disadvantageous conditions. His very success had ensured some attempt at readjustment. The Austrians were dispirited; \* and it was necessary to recover some of the lost ground on the Bainsizza plateau and restore the confidence of the soldiers of the Dual Monarchy.

The reasoning was obvious; and it was appreciated by the Allies that the complete breakdown in Russia allowed the enemy to collect men and guns for a counter-offensive. German troops and several fresh Austrian divisions were reported on the Isonzo front. But Cadorna felt confident that he could cope with such an operation, though he knew neither the exact place selected for the counter-attack nor the weight of troops which would deliver it. About the 18th of October the Austrian guns began to show unwonted activity, and then on the 23rd a tremendous bombardment began over the whole Italian line from Plezzo to the sea. The greatest intensity was between Plezzo and the Avschek valley on the Bainsizza plateau. The Italian 2nd Army, which had to bear the full fury of this bombardment, lay in a highly vulnerable position for attack. From Gorizia the Isonzo makes a rough S to the west, and the recent offensive had carried the 2nd Army across this double curve, leaving the re-entering angle, the strong bridgehead of Tolmino, in the hands of the Austrians. From Tolmino to the north there had been no serious fighting since the autumn of 1915, and Cadorna seems to have thought that the ground west of the line offered as little encouragement to the Austrians as that east offered inducement to the Italians. The 4th Corps lay from about Plezzo to midway between Caporetto and Tolmino. It had seen none of the heavy fighting and occupied a disproportionate length of front, since Capello had seven other corps in his 2nd Army. Left inactive to bear with reduced rations the repercussion of the Russian revolution, and to interpret the Pope's Peace Note in the light of the reports of heavy losses and the immobility of their front, is it any wonder that they were in no mood to bear the first onslaught of the Germans and the first real experience of gas shells? Their masks were of little use, and were later abandoned in favour of the British pattern. Heavy mist lay over the foreground, and when the bombardment ceased at dawn the troops peering through the mist came to the conclusion that nothing lay behind this impenetrable curtain of mist and silence, and the morning *communiqué* was issued as though the attack had been postponed. It was the exact anticipation of a situation which was to be repeated at Cambrai.

The 14th mixed German and Austrian army of General Otto von Below, who had faced the British about Arras, had been formed to stiffen the attacking troops; and when the bombardment had ceased, the storming columns were at once launched between Plezzo and the Tolmino bridgehead. Suddenly out of the mist these storming troops came. In the completeness of the surprise the lines were overrun for some miles. The telephone connections had gone in the bombardment, and no signals could be given for a protective barrage. Many of the men were partially asphyxiated in the rain of gas shells. South-west of Plezzo, at Saga and the Polounik

\* General Ludendorff is very frank about his reluctance to embark on this campaign in Italy, and he only selected it in preference to a continuance of the attack in Moldavia, because it was necessary "in order to prevent the collapse of Austria-Hungary." [*My Memories*, pp. 482-3.]

ridge, the defence recovered. But between the ridge and Tolmino the enemy reached the Isonzo. There were some small "islands" between where heroic detachments still fought on. About Tolmino, where the 7th Corps and the 27th were in the line, the surprise was equally complete, but the recoil was better. Monte Globocac, a peak which commands the Judrio valley, was stormed by the Germans, and retaken by an impetuous counter-attack of General Boriani's 5th Bersaglieri. Farther south the storming troops beat in vain against Badoglio's 27th Corps. But between this flank and the Polounik ridge the Austro-Germans were in possession of Caporetto and standing before the last barriers which closed the Natisone and Judrio valleys to the plain west of the Isonzo. The 27th Corps began to withdraw from the Bainsizza plateau, carrying away the bulk of its guns and its prisoners; but on the following day the retiring troops above began to lose cohesion. The few and poor roads were choked with them. They began to overwhelm the reserve troops who sought to get forward. Saga had to be evacuated. Monte Matajur, the peak which stood sentinel over the Natisone valley, was captured. The breach in the line could not be repaired. Capello, newly returned from sick leave to his unwieldy command of twenty divisions, advised an immediate and general retreat. But when he handed over his command to General Montuori, Cadorna from Udine could not see the urgency of his counsel. The Duke of Aosta's 3rd Army had beaten off every onset and was in secure possession of its positions on the Carso. General di Robilant's 4th Army on the Carnic front was as yet untouched. But on the morning of the 26th the whole of the left wing of the 2nd Army had gone. Part of it had already surrendered. Another part was in panic flight, sweeping like a flood down the hilly roads, and carrying away in confusion labour corps and the reserves. These were the very conditions which a sudden blow most hoped to produce, and Below was not the general to fail to exploit them. Boriani's Bersaglieri still lay on Monte Globocac, until the waves of advancing troops threatened to cut them off, as the heroic Alpini on Monte Nero had already been cut off.

On the evening of the 26th a general retreat was ordered, and Cadorna had made up his mind that, with the disorganisation and rupture of the 2nd Army, the largest in the line, he would be unable to stand until the Piave was reached. Such a retirement involved an operation of the most extraordinary difficulty. Between the south of the Trentino and the mouth of the Isonzo, the Italian front had traced the shape of a skull before the offensive. The 14th Austro-German Army had struck through the eye, and the Piave represented the base plate of the brain. To withdraw so great a body of troops to such a line meant that from this great arc hundreds of thousands of men must converge on the short final standing place. A vast amount of territory would have to be evacuated, and it would be impossible to save all or even the bulk of the *matériel*. General di Robilant wished to stand as an independent force in the Cadore, thinking he could hold on for some months; and the Duke of Aosta was reluctant to undertake so great a retreat. It was a bitter decision for many; but Cadorna was clearly right, as the event showed. The roads grew more and more choked as the troops fell back, sweeping before them and mingling with labour battalions, non-combatant troops, and refugees. All the conditions were ripe for disaster; and it was something approaching disaster that occurred. On the 27th the whole line was in full retreat, General di Robilant's 4th Army conforming with the left wing of the 2nd Army. The 3rd Army fell back in perfect order; but the retreat of the 2nd Army became more and more





The Austro-German Advance into Italy.

confused. The enemy began to flow down the Natisone and Judrio valleys, in the rear of the troops retiring from the Isonzo front farther south. On this day already they had reached the beautiful town of Cividale, in the Natisone valley, the railhead of the line to Udine. Foch is said to have urged French not to retire in the crisis of the First Battle of Ypres because of the impetus of the German pursuit. This characteristic was well shown in the Caporetto battle. The pursuit gathered head as it continued, and under its stress the Staff arrangements in the centre broke down utterly. What Staff could cope with such conditions? it may be asked. Early on the following day a daring patrol reached Udine, which had been general headquarters but five days before. In the evening the city was occupied. When it is remembered that Gorizia and Cormons were only evacuated the same day, it will be appreciated that the 3rd Army was falling back at a much slower pace, very steadily and with constant rearguard actions. Despite the pressure on its left wing, the army fought its way step by step to the Tagliamento, which lay thirty miles from the nearest point of the line before the retreat began. The bulk of the army fell back with the bulk of its guns under the careful shepherding of the Staff.

But by this time civilian refugees had begun to block the roads in their panic flight. The enemy was pressing down from the north with all his force in the endeavour to cut off the 3rd Army; and the choked roads, acting as a brake on the orderly withdrawal, tended to increase the chances of such a development. At this stage the Italian cavalry began to cover the retreat of the 3rd Army and the right wing of the 2nd Army. By the 31st the 14th Army had stormed the bridgeheads of Dignano and Codroipo, though General di Giorgio's little force as yet held them off the river at Pinzano. Below was intent on cutting off the 3rd Army, and had turned the direction of his main thrust southwards. The 2nd and 3rd Armies had their chance of escape across the Tagliamento considerably narrowed, and Below, partly owing to his own skill and resolution and partly owing to a tragic blunder on the part of the Italians, did succeed in cutting off a considerable force. The river was in flood and the troops were ready to cross by the bridge at Casarsa, below Codroipo, when a patrol of Below's army suddenly appeared. Everything was ready for the destruction of the bridge, and the officer in charge blew up the eastern section. The troops, who had fallen back in forced marches with little food and ammunition, thus saw their way of escape cut off. The river was over a mile wide, and some of the men surrendered to the enemy, while others plodded south to the bridgehead at Latisana, only to share the same fate in the end. Between the Austrian troops from the east and the flank of Below's army from the north a large body of troops was cut off. The German claim put the number at 60,000; and it was probably not far short of that total. The amount of material lost was almost more important. The river, by one of its characteristic caprices, began to fall and many men were able to cross by boat; but guns brought by incredible labours across the gorge of the Isonzo had here to be abandoned. Motor machine-gun companies, the cavalry, and the 4th Bersaglieri fought heroic battles to cover the withdrawal across the southern bridge; and under such conditions the 3rd Army withdrew. By the 1st November the bulk of the troops were west of the Tagliamento. Every effort was now made to reorganise the army and offer sufficient resistance to cover the labours which were being made far to the west to put the Piave in a state of defence. For a moment there was a breathing space, and the Commander-in-Chief could take stock of his positions. Over 200,000 men



had been lost and more than 2,000 guns. The prisoners included the wounded and the non-combatant services, such as labour battalions. But even of effectives the loss was very serious, and the guns were a graver matter still. Of the war *matériel* in general it is impossible to give even an approximate estimate. Vast heads of shell at various places, huge stores, and supplies of all kinds had to be left behind; and men had to go short of food and protection against the heavy rains and to fight with the barest allowance of ammunition because of their loss.

Three days before, the Commander-in-Chief had issued a *communiqué* which, even with the Censor's corrections, filled the hearts of people with dismay: "A violent attack and the insufficient resistance of certain units of the 2nd Army has permitted the Austro-German forces to break through our left wing on the Julian sector. . . ." Such a report issued by General Cadorna recalled the first stages of the Russian breakdown, and many anxious watchers came to take their fears for the reality. The breakdown in *moral* was real, but it was confined to certain sectors; and, with the memory of the sequel to Ludendorff's offensive in the West on March 21, 1918, we can realise the inevitability of heavy losses and continued retreat when once the defensive has been completely pierced. But in the preceding October the Western Allies were without this unhappy experience, and were inclined to regard the continuance of the Italian retirement and the great captures of prisoners and war material as evidence of a failure of *moral* much more widespread than in fact it was. Cadorna's *communiqué* stimulated his countrymen into a fiercer resistance, and the retirement, though hard pressed and conducted still with heavy loss, took a new measure after reaching the Tagliamento River. No serious stand could be made there. When the river fell it was easily fordable; and as it had not been put into a state of defence, and was too long a line for an army which had suffered so heavily to hold, it offered no more than a momentary rest for recovery.

A pause was necessary also for the enemy. No success such as that which had been achieved had been expected, and in remembering this we must appreciate the high degree of skill and resolution which had so exploited an unlooked-for success. But no preparation had been made to press the victory to a complete decision. Below, with a sure instinct, had struck southward, intent on the congested area towards the sea. But, with greater resources, he would have thrown formidable columns in the rear of the Carnic front, and harvested the other field which lay ripe to the sickle. As it was, the Carnic sector and the Upper Tagliamento had so far felt little pressure, and the pursuit farther south could not be safely continued with a vigorous army on its flank. The enemy had accordingly to make a readjustment towards the north, and the first days of November saw heavy attacks against the bridgeheads of Gemona and Pinzano, which lay on the upper course of the river. On 2nd November both bridgeheads were stormed; but General di Giorgio's little force fell back across the river and for two days longer forbade the crossing. These precious days were of the greatest profit to the Italian command, and they showed a defence as tenacious as it was skilful. It was on this day when the enemy crossed the Tagliamento at Pinzano and began to press westward that the conference at Rapallo was held. Generals Foch and Sir William Robertson had hurried to Italy in the first days of the retreat, and they were joined at Rapallo by Mr. Lloyd George, Generals Smuts and Sir Henry Wilson; M. Painlevé, the French Premier, and M. Franklin Bouillon; Signor Orlando, the Italian Premier, Baron

Sonnino, the Foreign Minister, General Alfieri, the Minister of War, and General Porro, sub-chief of the General Staff. For immediate relief Allied reinforcements were promised, and to avoid similar occurrences in the future the Allies decided to set up at Versailles a council of the Allies to meet once a month to concert policy, and a military council to remain in constant session, a sort of Supreme General Staff, to survey the whole of the Western and South-western areas and ensure a more perfect co-operation among the three nations. General Cadorna was nominated as Italian representative, and General Diaz, the brilliant commander of the 23rd Army Corps which had fought so ably on the Carso, succeeded him. Apart from the merits of the case, expediency calls for the supersession of a commander who has badly failed, and there had been faults in Cadorna's dispositions which directly conduced to the breakdown. General Porro, like his chief, was superseded, and in his place two generals were appointed in order that the duties might be divided. General Badoglio, the commander of the 27th Corps, which, fired by his resolution, had stood like a rock on the left centre of the 2nd Army when the line dissolved about it, had only been given his regiment at the outbreak of the war; and General Giardino, his collaborator, a former Minister of War, had then been a colonel. He was but fifty-three years of age, and Badoglio was seven years younger. Even Diaz was only fifty-six, and the new *régime* was therefore one of comparatively young men.

The crossing at Pinzano turned the line of the Tagliamento, and the troops began to fall back to the Livenza, which interposes its course between that of the Tagliamento and the Piave. The troops were now falling back from Carnia and Cadore as rapidly as possible, fighting heavy rearguard actions to cover the retreat of the main body of the 4th Army. In this hilly region the struggle split up into numerous stubborn actions. Some of the troops held out too long. Thus a whole division, between Tolmezzo and Gemona, were still fighting when the main army was on the Livenza. There on Monte Simeone they were finally cut off on 7th November and compelled to surrender. Smaller units escaped the enemy columns and pursued a guerilla warfare for varying periods. One battalion, under Captain Arduino, held out for a year; and there were numerous smaller bodies, some of which found their way back to the Italian lines long after they had been given up for lost. On 6th November the 3rd Army was on the Livenza, and the following day the bulk of the troops were across the Piave. Already French and British divisions had reached Italy, where they were received with almost delirious enthusiasm. But they went very quietly and rapidly to the final line of the Italians on the Adige, and there waited while the new positions at the Piave were tested.

**Asiago to Quero.**—But the recoil had already come; and when Marshal Konrad von Hötzendorff opened the second phase of the great battle with an attack west of the Val Sugana against Giraldo's 1st Army he met with a fierce resistance. The plan,\* however, was sound and searching. At this moment there were still bodies of troops east of the Piave stealing precious hours for the organisation of the Piave defence; and a considerable part of the 4th Army was holding up the advance in Cadore. It was four days (11th November) before Longarone was captured with some 10,000 troops. The day before Belluno had been occupied. The troops here lay in a precarious salient, and if the thrust across the Asiago plateau had succeeded nothing could have saved them. Not only would the Piave line have

\* It was suggested by Ludendorff.



been turned, but the conditions would have been ripe for another disorderly retreat. North, east, and west the 1st Army was threatened, but it was fired by a spirit similar to that which kept the heroic Alpini on Monte Nero steadfast long after all hope of succour had fled. On 4th November the Italian airmen reported that they were still fighting in their original position within the northernmost loop of the Isonzo, and when they gave in is even now not known. There were many wonderful deeds in the war, but there can have been few to surpass this heroic stand. And it is well to realise that the leaden cloud which for a time eclipsed Italy's military effort was shot with gold.

It was in the rear of an army standing in such precarious position that Hötendorff struck on 8th November, and for a fortnight the possibility of another retreat and the evacuation of more of the fair lands of Italy hung in the balance. Little ground could be given west of Val Sugana without opening the gates of the plain. East of Val Sugana the 4th Army was taking up its new defence positions, and on the 10th the troops were standing in the line below Feltre to the right wing of the 1st Army. The hilly fringe of the plain offered natural aids to the defensive, and it was too thin to be yielded without peril. Yet the new attack was pressed with the greatest vigour, and the concentrated armies of the enemy, flushed with success, sought to force their way through to the plain of Venetia. The attack was conducted under cover of diversions along the Middle and Lower Piave. Almost at once Asiago fell to the Austrian assault, and a distinct advance was made in the Sugana valley. A brilliant counter-attack by the 5th Bersaglieri and Tuscan brigade recovered the town, but it had to be evacuated again. With these initial successes in hand the attack was developed up to Val Sugana. The Italians on Monte Longara and Castel Gomberto were now attacked from three sides: Under the repeated attacks first Monte Longara and then Meletta and Lisser were abandoned, but the precarious salient about Castel Gomberto was still held. The struggle at this point, which began on 14th November and persisted for over a week, was extremely bitter. The Frenzela valley was at stake, and if the enemy had been able to secure that he would, at one stroke, compel the Italians to make a considerable readjustment on both sides of the Brenta into which it runs.

With the evacuation of Lisser the positions east of the Brenta were in a salient. In mountainous country alone could such positions be tenable as were held time after time between Asiago and the Piave. But with the advance on the west side of the Brenta, gun positions were secured from which a considerable area of the Italian lines between that river and the Piave could be taken from the rear; and accordingly prudence counselled the evacuation of the forward lines. In this fashion were the fortunes of one sector dependent upon another. Monte Roncone and Monte Tomatico with the town of Feltre were first abandoned, and the line was drawn north of Quero across to Monte Prassolan. The salient had been flattened, though the Commander-in-Chief knew that the final line had not as yet been reached. On 15th November the whole sector between Asiago and the Piave was ablaze, and the enemy was able, after a fierce battle, to press down the Brenta to Cison and later to San Marino.

It was while this struggle was at its height that the Austrians and Germans attempted to force the passage of the Piave. The enemy's purpose was clear. The critical struggle in the hills was expected to yield decisive results, and to ensure this development it was necessary to immobilise as many troops as possible on the river

line. Venice lay not far beyond, and the Italians could not surrender this beautiful city without offering a desperate resistance. Hötzenendorff's thrust at Asiago had been accompanied by a tentative blow at the Middle Piave, but on 12th November Boroévitch's troops crossed the river and secured the loop which it makes at Zenson, some seventeen or eighteen miles from the sea. But they were at once pinned to their positions, could make no headway, and held on only under heavy loss. On the following day attempts to cross were made at five other places by Below's and Boroévitch's armies, but only one of them succeeded. If the enemy had succeeded in crossing just above Quero, the Italians who were still occupying Feltre and Monte Tomatico would have been in immediate peril. But they were held up there, at San Dona di Piave, and at Intestadura. Some three miles from the mouth of the river, however, the Hungarians seized the crossing at Grisolera and pushed their way across the marshy area to the old Piave course. The next few days saw renewed attempts to cross, and on the 16th a footing was gained above Ponte di Piave where the great Treviso track runs. But a determined counter-attack decisively checked the advance and inflicted heavy loss on the assailants, over 1,500 prisoners being taken. The Piave line continued to be tested mile by mile for another day; but the Duke of Aosta's army, despite its recent terrible experiences, proved equal to every call, and for a time the attempts to cross the river were abandoned.

Between the Brenta and the Piave the assault had been incessant. Near the river the Italian positions formed a sharp salient about Monte Fontana Secca. From this peak the line ran by Monte Spinoncia to the Tomba ridge and Monfenera. About Quero the positions of the 9th Corps (General Ruggieri Laderchi) were tested point by point. Repeated gallant and skilful attempts were made to seize the Tomba-Monfenera ridge and to thrust up the valley between the ridge and the river. Quero was abandoned and occupied by the enemy on the 18th, and on this day a carefully staged attack was made to secure the ridge. The stake was the cutting off of the troops who lay in the Fontana Secca salient, immediately to the west. The Austrians gained a footing on the ridge, and for a whole day struggled to maintain themselves there. General di Robilant's skill and resolution were proof against panic readjustments, and he only gave ground where he was forced to do so. At the critical moment, when the Austro-Hungarians had secured a foothold but were wavering, Garde Jäger were thrown in and carried the ridge. An impetuous counter-attack swept them off; but the dwindling troops of the 9th Corps were weary and almost worn out, and they could not maintain themselves in full possession. The enemy now began a serious attack on the Monte Fontana Secca salient which persisted for a whole week. It was the day upon which Byng astonished the world with his sensational attack at Cambrai; and on the morrow, although the enemy again reached the crest of the Tomba ridge, Laderchi counter-attacked and practically cleared it once more. It was a narrow superiority indeed, but it was clear that the incessant attacks had, for the present, worn the finish off the enemy tactics, and the day marked a turning-point in the whole of this great battle.

The struggle still persisted with terrible fierceness for some days. Another determined attempt to storm Monfenera from the east was made on the 25th, but it was heavily repulsed. And on the same day the Fontana Secca salient was attacked from Col della Berretta, near San Martino, to Monte Spinoncia. German Jäger and Austrian Alpini formed part of the storming divisions. But the Italian Alpini



near the Brenta and the 56th Division at Spinoncia crushed the attacks, though the crest of Monte Pertica, on the east of Col della Berretta, was lost the following day, after changing hands several times. But it was on the 21st that the Italian theatre ceased to interest the German "War Chronicle," and it was some little time before the attack was resumed under other conditions. The crisis was past. General Diaz was now completely confident that he could hold his own, and the Allied divisions, who had long been in Italy, began to move up to the line. There were critical days still to come; but whether the troops need be withdrawn to the Adige was never again in question. Below disappeared. He had won sufficient laurels for the present, and the more slowly moving drama was not sufficient to necessitate his direction. The men who were relieved in the short respite before the next phase were almost too weary to move. The losses suffered since the stand on the Piave, though not comparable with those of the preceding fortnight, were very heavy. But the men who survived knew that they had achieved one of the most difficult things in warfare: they had arrested a victorious pursuit by first-rate troops, skilfully led and directed with invincible resolution.

**The Struggle for the Brenta.**—The new battles between the Asiago plateau and the Piave found the Italian army profiting by the relief of the French and British corps.\* The commanders were Fayolle, the brilliant commander at the Battle of the Somme, and Plumer, who had so ably directed the 2nd British Army in the Battle of Messines and in the Third Battle of Ypres. The French took over the Monte Tomba sector, and the British the Montello sector, that hilly feature which fills a curve of the Piave to the south. The link between the British and the French was, very appropriately, the Alpine brigade of General "Peppino" Garibaldi. He had fought in France before Italy entered the war, and his brigade had recently formed part of the 9th Corps, the rest of which had passed to the reserve. As his mother was English, a better liaison could scarcely be imagined. But the Allied troops, who were only too anxious to relieve the strain upon Italy and had taken over a sector which seemed critical, were not attacked. The battle moved farther west. Marshal von Hötendorff west and Marshal Krobatin east of the Brenta made a prolonged attempt to push the Italians over the thin rim of the hills into the plain. Krobatin had inherited Below's German forces. Hötendorff had a powerful force and numerous heavy guns at his disposal; and the two marshals struck alternately west and east of the Brenta in the endeavour to allow their troops to debouch by it on to the plain. In the first period it was said that Below lay with a re-formed army over against the British front, ready to exploit any further breakdown among the Italian troops. The French and British groups included famous divisions, and the immediate commanders, General Duchesne, who had commanded an army in Nivelles's offensive, and Generals Lord Cavan and Haking, were resolute and experienced generals. But their chance was deferred.

The pause in the operations had been used by the enemy to concentrate their artillery against the salient on each side of the Brenta. Between the Piave and the Brenta the Italian positions threw a narrow curve about Solarolo. On the east lay the Tomba ridge, where the French now lay. On the west the line stretched from San Martino via the Col della Berretta and Monte Pertica above the rocky bastion of Monte Grappa. This salient hampered Krobatin's movements, and it was marked down for reduction. A somewhat similar salient, west of the Brenta, closed the

\* The two corps included the 5th, 7th, 23rd, 41st, and 48th Divisions.

entrance to the Frenzela valley, which opened into the Brenta at Valstagna, some three miles below San Marino. On flat ground such narrow salients could never be held except at a prohibitive cost, and even in mountainous country they were liable to be cut off if a sufficient concentration of artillery could be directed against them. The third phase in this prolonged struggle saw the two marshals attempt to reduce the salients by this means. A terrific bombardment was opened against the Frenzela salient on 4th December. The sector was deluged with gas shells and heavy explosive. There had been no time, and the terrain was unsuitable, for the construction of adequate shelter, and the Italian gas masks had not yet been changed. The heroic defenders had therefore to bear, half asphyxiated, an unaccustomed bombardment, very skilfully directed and interrupted repeatedly to induce the troops to come from their hiding-places and suffer further destruction. About midday on the 5th the salient was vigorously assaulted from the direction of Sisemol, on the west ; while a heavier blow was directed against the positions at Monte Tondarecar and Monte Badenecche on the east. The Austrian troops penetrated to the rear of these positions and isolated a force of 11,000 men in the apex of the salient at Castel Gomberto. The success was of considerable importance and necessitated an extensive readjustment in the line. The Austrians advanced on the little village of Forza ; but resolute rearguards held up the assailants while the line was re-formed in the rear of Montes Fior and Badenecche. The withdrawal at one stroke gave the enemy the door of the Frenzela valley which had so long been denied them.

Such a swift success whetted the Austrians' appetite, and a furious attack was at once delivered against the western front of the Frenzela positions in order to exploit the confusion of the moment. Below Asiago the Italian line, between Monte Sisemol and Monte Caberlaba, lay almost in a north-south direction, and on the 6th Hötzenдорff attacked this sector with his troops facing eastward. At the same time the victorious troops to the north attempted to force their way down the Frenzela valley. But neither attack made much headway. The Alpini and Bersaglieri stood steadfastly in their new improvised positions ; and Hötzenдорff saw that no short cuts could be made, and betook himself to a fresh artillery concentration. The moving of heavy guns in such country required time, and meanwhile Krobotin opened his attack east of the Brenta.

After a heavy bombardment between the Brenta and Monte Spinoncia, similar tactics to those which had proved successful against the Castel Gomberto salient were used. An attempt was made by a fierce thrust, the spearhead of which was formed by German troops, to cut off the Solarolo salient from the north-east. Monte Spinoncia fell to the Germans, who thus cut into the eastern face of the salient. But the cut was not deep enough, and the readjustments were made with precision and skill. Near the Brenta ground was lost on Col della Berretta, regained by a determined counter-attack, and lost once more ; and by the 14th the enemy had secured Col Caprile, and with it more freedom in the Brenta sector. A fresh German Jäger division was thrown against the Solarolo salient three days later ; but the defenders stood firmly to their new positions. On the next day, however, an important success was gained. A heavy attack was directed from the newly gained positions near the Brenta, and Monte Asolone was captured. The Italians still clung to the southern slopes ; but they were unable to drive the enemy from the summit, and, installed there, he lay on the flank of Monte Grappa and nearer Valstagna.



This struggle had not died down before Hötendorff resumed his assault on the Frenzela positions. After a heavy bombardment on the 22nd, he attacked the following day and wiped out the salient west of the valley, capturing several thousand prisoners. The heroic 5th Bersaglieri counter-attacked on Christmas Eve and recovered the bulk of the positions. But another fierce assault and recoil on Christmas Day left the Austrians in possession of the balance of advantages, and then fell the welcome snows. The seasons had all been late that year. The late spring had postponed Cadorna's first offensive, and the late winter had given the Austrians a month longer to fight their duel with time for the lost outposts of the plain. Before the close of the year the French had recovered the eastern feature of the Tomba ridge. On New Year's Day the Duke of Aosta cleared the Zenson bend and threw the enemy back to the east of the Piave; and before the end of January the 4th and 1st Armies had recovered ground lost on Asolone and west of the Frenzela.

The great enemy campaign had secured very important successes. It gave to Austria stores which were badly needed. It weakened the Italians in men and still more in munitions, and it fanned the waning flame of Austria's war spirit. It served as a proof to Ludendorff that surprise and at least partial decisions were still attainable, and sealed the resolution to attempt a decision on the Western front. But in a final casting up of the results of the campaign it is difficult to think that the Allies did not gain by it almost as much as they lost. It certainly brought about a new solidarity, military and economic, among the Allies; and it finally turned the hearts of waverers in Italy. Cadorna's dispositions were certainly not beyond reproach, and Capello's use of his huge army showed little skill or foresight. The offensive was expected, and while there was no shortage of troops or munitions for a successful defensive, the sector attacked was left culpably weak. But if we must praise the skill and resolution of the enemy, we must also remember the very gallant recovery of the Italians. The sudden and complete rupture of the front of one of the Western Allies had in it elements of the incredible. But it was almost equally incredible that an army so heavily defeated, compelled to fall back under so imperious a pursuit, should recover and stand against almost two months' determined attack. Sufficient weight was not given to this aspect of the campaign. But in this fierce struggle some of the Italian troops proved themselves the equal of any in the field.

## II. THE FRENCH VICTORY ON THE AISNE HEIGHTS.

IN the last week of October, when the whole military situation suddenly awoke from its mood of pedestrian change, not the least startling of the operations was that by which General Maistre, under General Pétain, drove the Germans finally off the Chemin des Dames ridge, which runs along from west to east above the Aisne. General Nivelle had attacked there in April; but his success was overshadowed by the cost. He had not secured the whole of the road, and a tense and confused struggle ensued for several months. The area became like another Verdun. The Germans threw against it time after time their picked troops. They had, willy-nilly, to fight on in order that bad might not become worse; and also in order to prevent the French advancing until a formidable secondary position was arranged in the rear. Towards autumn the Germans ceased to struggle with the

same violence. They saw that they could not recover the lost position ; and, moreover, they felt that their lines in the rear had been sufficiently established to give them a good position if the worst should befall. The French noted the pause in the great attacks, and determined to profit by it.

The line north of Soissons made a great bend. The elbow was almost as strong a natural position as could be conceived. It was indeed the key, not only to the immediate area, but to the whole of the position in France. Its strength lay to some extent in the broad area it covered. The city of Laon, with its beautiful cathedral perched upon a hill, was its centre. To the south-west lay the extensive forest of St. Gobain. A high isolated hill flanked on the west the Laon-Soissons road, and the eastern flank was a ridge running parallel to that above the Aisne. West of Hurtebise the Germans were still entrenched upon the Chemin des Dames ridge, and to the east they held the crest of the ridge. Their positions had been chosen with care, and they were difficult to attack successfully. But the organisation by which they were held was elaborate even for the Germans. Neither the French nor the Germans had observation over the other lines. The limestone ridge had been hewn out into quarries, and the Germans had driven deep tunnels into the solid rock. Some of these caverns could hold a whole brigade of troops, and there was, besides, all the ordinary apparatus of defence. Multitudes of machine guns in concrete and steel emplacements, and covered by dense masses of barbed wire, were calculated to give pause to the most determined assailant. To shatter this defence the French had to place their shells with almost miraculous accuracy, and cast them into the mouths of the underground caverns in which the Germans lay secure.

But the French artillery was equal to the calls upon it, and the preliminary bombardment placed so impassable a barrier between the troops defending the ridge and their supports that, at the last, the Germans were supplying their forward troops by aeroplane. The advance took place over a front of about five miles between Laffaux Mill and La Royère Farm, and was carried out by seven divisions. The heaviest guns had been firing for some days, and the aeroplanes were able to see shot after shot fall into the cavern mouths on the ridge. Some of the caverns had their roofs pierced by the heavy shells ; and it can be imagined that life was not good for the men who held such positions. Just before the assault, the air was rent by the shrieks and thunder of the intensified bombardment ; and as the misty day broke the sky was lit up by a dazzling display of flashes of all colours. The storming troops had taken up their preparatory positions during the night. At one point of the front of attack, the Germans, driven by the pressure of the terrible bombardment, determined to make a counter-thrust. Their troops had been assembled about Pargny and Filain, on the right of the French sector of attack. But the assault was timed to be delivered a little later than that of the French, and when the French infantry went forward they at once absorbed all the German attention. Four German divisions lay on the sector, and they included two Guard divisions. There were also two divisions in support. The French success was therefore the more remarkable. The strongest point in the line of their advance was the dismantled Fort Malmaison, which lay upon a hummock in the ground, and had been carefully strengthened by the Germans. The most important was Chavignon, which lies on a knoll overlooking the whole of the Ailette valley, and commanded a clear view of Laon on its little hill, eight miles distant.





The Scene of the French Victory.

The French infantry had concentrated calmly, and went forward at dawn on 23rd October with their accustomed dash. Their success was immediate. The terrible nature of the bombardment and the swiftness and violence of the attack had shaken the defence into confusion. Orders were captured on one prisoner showing the contradictory ideas. The commander was ordered to hold at all costs, and also to evacuate the point. By the evening of Tuesday (24th), the French had taken 7,500 prisoners, and had reached the village of Chavignon. The full depth of their advance was about two miles, and besides Chavignon it included the villages of Allemant and Vaudesson and Fort Malmaison. This fort was held by the 5th Guards Division, but it was assaulted with such dash that almost the whole of the garrison was captured, and the Guards figured largely among the prisoners. During the struggle troops of three other divisions were thrown into the battle; but they were unable to stem the fierce onset, and the French drove the troops before them over the ridge down to the valley of the Ailette. They were already in much improved positions, with observational facilities which gave them an immediate advantage for the development of their success. On the following day, another 500 prisoners were taken, and the Staff of three regiments were found to be among the captured. The number of guns taken amounted to over seventy. On the 25th, the Germans retreated rapidly to the Aisne-Oise Canal; but the French were on their heels and secured another 3,000 prisoners, with a further fifty guns. The French had now gained possession of a considerable parallelogram of important country; and though the Germans were able to stand on the north side of the canal, they had yielded too much ground for their safety in the adjacent sectors. No counter-attack was made, and the French organised their gains under the best conditions, and prepared to exploit them to the full. They commanded all the Ailette valley, and the reverse of the ridge which holds the Chemin des Dames. They looked as through an open window between the hill west of the Laon-Soissons road and the ridge north of the Ailette up to Laon, though its approaches and feeding avenues were on the reverse side of the city, hidden from view. They had taken all they had hoped to take, and the forest of Pinon, Pargny, and Filain, which had not been expected to fall into their hands at once. They had inflicted heavy losses upon the Germans. In prisoners alone, 11,157 were out of the battle, and 200 guns had fallen into their hands. But the success was to have an even greater effect. Its leverage upon the Chemin des Dames ridge was so great and so immediate that the Germans recognised the inevitable and fell back. On 2nd November the French found that the Germans were retiring along the twelve and a half mile front that lies between Froidmont Farm and a point east of Craonne. It is a comparatively easy thing to fall back without attracting notice. Almost every night a number of troops "fall back" and find their way to the rear, while others take their place. A retreat merely means that no relieving troops take the place of those who are withdrawn. If the operation is done skilfully there is no reason why it should not be quite secret and equally safe. The Germans announced the retirement to the world as though it were a wise operation of their initiative. It was simply the skill of a man who finding his head in a noose rapidly withdraws it. The positions had become untenable after the recent French success, and the Germans realised the position and withdrew.

The retirement gave the French the villages of Courteçon, Ailles, Chevreux, and Cerny-en-Laonnois, with the northern slopes of the Chemin des Dames ridge and the



falling ground to the Ailette. The Germans installed themselves on the ridge above the Ailette, and were for the time being in a stronger position than they had had since Nivelle's attack in May, or indeed since the first Battle of the Aisne. To force them out of their new positions, the French would have to climb the slopes north of the Ailette against the massed fire of the German guns. But they had lost the favourable chance of movement south of the Aisne. Their observation was limited to the northern slopes of the Chemin des Dames ridge, and the new front was not so formidable a position as this had been. It was sufficiently strong to impose a great handicap upon the advance ; but it was the inner defensive line of the Laon salient, and the French could look past it some seven miles to Laon on the west and look round it from the eastern end of the ridge. The Germans had only improved their position in the same way that a fortress garrison does which, seeing its outer cincture pierced, falls back upon the inner to meet the final assault. Little of this, it must be remarked, was considered when the event took place. All eyes were on Italy in her heroic struggle against the Austro-German pursuit.

### III. THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI.

It was while the Italians were passing the critical stage of the attacks of the Germans and Austrians on their last line before the Venetian plain was reached that the world was amazed by the announcement of a sudden breach in the "Hindenburg Line." The Bolsheviks had taken the reins in Petrograd with the avowed object of making peace. Italy had lost the effectives of a great army with huge supplies of war material, had abandoned a vast historic area, and as yet it was not clear that the Venetian plain could be retained.

Such was the atmosphere in which Mr. Lloyd George made, at Paris, a speech which set its seal on the prevailing pessimism. It needed only this pessimistic statement of the Allies' position to reduce people to hopeless depression. The Premier, of course, was about to make a momentous announcement which he felt would meet with opposition, and he naturally met the opposition by first overstating the case for unity of control. It is time-honoured tactics, but it was taken in deadly seriousness by the vast majority of people. It was read as a full criticism and repudiation of the whole year's strategy of battering at an impenetrable wall ; and people were not slow to infer a general hopelessness if this, the considered strategy of the Allies, was so clearly a choice of desperation. There were some who seized upon the criticism of the strategy of "Westernism" with avidity, but with the majority the inference was wider.

In this prevailing mood of pessimism a wave of hope began to make itself evident on the evening of the 20th November, and by the following forenoon rumour was abroad that an amazing victory had been won. In the afternoon a report was received from Sir Douglas Haig : "Yesterday morning the 3rd Army, under the command of General the Hon. Sir Julian Byng, delivered a number of attacks between St. Quentin and the river Scarpe. These attacks were carried out without previous artillery preparation, and in each case the enemy were completely surprised. Our troops have broken into the enemy's positions to a depth of between four and five miles on a wide front, and have captured several thousand prisoners

with a number of guns. At the hour of assault on the principal front of the attack a large number of tanks moved forward in advance of the infantry, and broke through the successive belts of German wire, which were of great depth and strength. Following through the gaps made by the tanks, English, Scottish, and Irish regiments swept over the enemy's outposts, and stormed the first defensive system of the Hindenburg Line on the whole front. Our infantry and tanks then pressed on in accordance with programme, and captured the German second system of defence more than a mile beyond. This latter is known as the Hindenburg support line. In the course of this advance East-country troops took the hamlet of Bonavis and Lateau Wood after stiff fighting. English rifle regiments and light infantry captured La Vacquerie, and the formidable defences of the spur known as Welsh Ridge. Other English country troops stormed the village of Ribecourt, and fought their way through Coutlett Wood. Highland Territorial battalions crossed the Grand Ravine and entered Flesquières, where fierce fighting took place. West Riding Territorials captured Havrincourt and the German trench systems north of the village, while Ulster battalions covering the latter's left flank moved northwards up the west bank of the Canal du Nord. Later in the morning our advance was continued, and rapid progress was made at all points. English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh battalions secured the crossings of the canal at Masnières and captured Marcoing and Neuf Wood. The West Riding troops who had taken Havrincourt made remarkable progress east of the Canal du Nord, storming the villages of Graincourt and Anneux, and with the Ulster troops operating west of the canal carried the whole of the German line northwards to the Bapaume-Cambrai road. West Lancashire Territorials broke into the enemy's position east of Epehy, and Irish troops have captured important sections of the Hindenburg Line between Bullecourt and Fontaine-lez-Croisilles. The number of prisoners, guns, and material captured cannot yet be estimated. The spell of fine dull weather which favoured our preparations for our attacks broke early yesterday. Heavy rain fell during the night and the weather is now stormy."

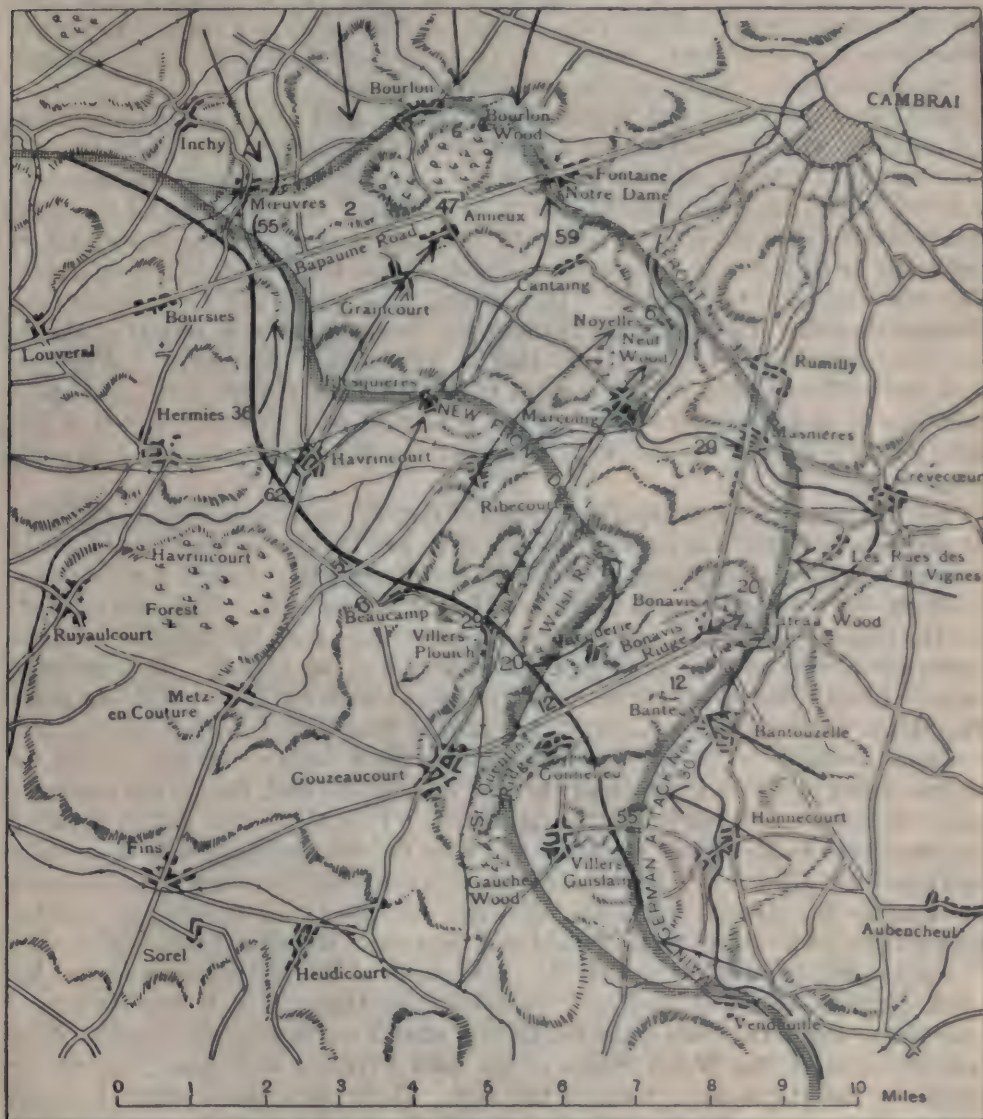
Such was the news of the most striking British victory of the war up to that moment. Its accompaniments were as amazing as its setting. The course of the war had developed the tactics of attack in one persistent direction. There was a bombardment, frequently accompanied by an emission of gas, and then the infantry assault began. There were a number of ways in which the prescription might be mixed, but its ingredients were the same. Sometimes the bombardment was prolonged for days or weeks to rase the formidable works which the Germans had built. This was the general preparation, and immediately before the attack the bombardment was increased to drum fire. The line of development had tended to lengthen the bombardment, and the drum fire was in some attacks put on several times before the assault was delivered. There was an obvious reason for this bombardment.

In front of the trenches dense masses of wire were put down to prevent the advance of the troops. The wire had to be cut away, or else the infantry would be held up by it and decimated by the opposing machine guns. The natural sequence of the attack seemed to be stereotyped; and, when it was recognised, an army could provide a suitable means of defence. The front lines were held lightly, and the rear positions more strongly. The few troops who were left to stand the shock of the bombardment were provided with deep dug-outs, and all the men were



kept in safe cover. With a necessary preamble of some length any attack could be provided for by an army with good communications.

The natural result of this development was seen at daybreak on 20th November,



Battle of Cambrai: showing the original line, the British front on November 30th, and the final position after the German counter-attack. The numbers indicate the various British divisions engaged.

when, preceded by 400 tanks, Byng's 3rd Army moved forward without the usual preliminaries to attack. The surprise was complete, and the gain immediate and great. It would have been impossible without the tanks, but it was in ignoring this new feature that the Germans made the mistake. They sneered at the tanks, and

boasted of how easily they could deal with them. In actual fact the tanks moved steadily forward through the dense wire at daybreak, and the infantry were able to follow as readily as if the heaviest bombardment had cut them a path. Their machine guns swept along trenches and deluged redoubts, and the tanks acted like small movable forts, moving through villages, and in effect occupying them. At Lateau Wood a tank even charged a battery of 5.9 guns, pushed between and in amongst them, scattering their crews and capturing all the guns.

Another tank, on its first appearance in battle, went through Cantaing before the cavalry. It was a great day for the inventors of the tanks; but it was a day that also saw the cavalry in effective use once more, in conjunction with aeroplanes and infantry. The extreme limits of attack were Epehy and Fontaine-lez-Croisilles, places about thirty miles apart. But the main sector of attack was the stretch of ten miles or so between the Bapaume-Cambrai and the Péronne-Cambrai roads. The line was the "impregnable" Hindenburg Line which had been pronounced stronger than that from which the Germans had been compelled to retreat in March. Its main importance, however, was that it lay so near Cambrai. "What are positions?" General von Armin, anxious to minimise the British gains, said about this time to an interviewer. Cambrai was a position of such importance that if it were lost or put under the guns of an opponent, the boasted Hindenburg Line could not be held.

Cambrai was the most important centre of German communications in the West at that time. Roads and railways centred in it, and the line certainly could not be held without it. The objective of the British in delivering their assault was to capture Cambrai, and thereby force the Germans to fall back once more. Their end in selecting the time for the attack was the deliverance of Italy from the German reinforcements which were on the way to give the Italians the *coup de grâce*. It is necessary to point this out, for the attack was delivered by an insufficient force to hold the gains. The attack had been long planned;\* but at that time there was no indication that the force available would not be sufficient to secure a decisive victory. When the Italian defeat occurred it remained the best method of relief, though the command could no longer expect to realise the full results. Five of the best British divisions had been sent to Italy, and the army had been for months engaged in an arduous and expensive offensive. It is by these strangely opposed factors we must measure the attack—the obvious end clearly seen and skilfully aimed at, and the practical impossibility of attaining it and retaining it because of the army's real weakness.

On the third day of the attack the Highlanders of the 51st Division moved forward north of Cantaing, and took Fontaine-notre-Dame; but it was recaptured later in the day. On Friday, the fourth day, after a severe struggle, Bourlon Wood was captured by the Welsh troops of the 40th Division, and some progress was made by the Highlanders towards the east. There were also distinct successes west of the wood, at Mœuvres, Quéant, and Bullecourt. Saturday saw the struggle for Bourlon Wood joined yet more fiercely, and the garrison, though strengthened by the 14th Argyll and Sutherlands, for a few hours lost the high ground. Bourlon Wood was a black mound rising to a height of 100 metres and dominating all the country eastward past Cambrai, and overlooking the ground also to the south. While Bourlon Wood was retained, Cambrai could not be held. Lying but some four miles away and clearly visible, it could be shelled so that the railway would be

\* See page 811.



impossible to use. It is this that explains the extraordinary violence of the fighting there. Bourlon village had been penetrated in the first rush of the attack, but it could not be held. Its ruins were a fit cover for machine-gun posts, and the British were never able to reduce them. The bells of St. Paul's were rung on this day, but very few knew how much or how little there was for which to ring. On Saturday morning the left of the 40th Division moved down the hill again, and, with the assistance of the Highlanders, entered Bourlon village once more; but some of the 12th Suffolks and 14th Highland Light Infantry were cut off in the street fighting. Most of the village was lost the same day, and with it the troops who had been cut off; but the positions in the wood were maintained. By this time 9,774 prisoners, including 182 officers, had been taken, and over 100 guns. On this day Sir Douglas Haig issued his order of the day: "The capture of the important Bourlon position yesterday crowns a most successful operation, and opens the way to a further exploitation of the advantages already gained. In the operations of the 3rd Army during the past four days, the troops engaged were called on to advance under conditions different to anything ever attempted before. The manner in which they adapted themselves to the new conditions was in all respects admirable, and the results gained by their efforts are of far-reaching importance . . ." These were the measured words of the Commander-in-Chief, and they suggested that the battle was over so far as the Allies were concerned. Its major purpose had been attained. The whole of the German army and people was excited by the sudden *coup*, and some critics, like Major Moraht, were found admitting the possibility of being compelled to abandon the Italian offensive. Colonel Feyler, the Swiss military critic, said that the Germans would have to fall back, since Cambrai was under the British guns.

But the fighting never died down. The aeroplanes were able to discover signs of rapid concentration behind the German lines. Troops were being hurried up, some from the north of Cambrai and some from the south. But these preparations for the counter-attack did not prevent the Germans keeping up desultory fighting of the most violent character. On the night of the 26th, after beating off a heavy counter-attack, the garrison of Bourlon Wood pressed down into the village and rescued a small body of East Surreys who had been holding out, cut off, for two days. Their plight had been discovered by the heroism of a signaller, who made his way through the German cordon and, though exhausted, was able to tell the North Country troops. In the half light of the following morning the Guards, who had replaced the Highlanders, forced their way once more into Fontaine, and fought a fierce battle in the streets. About 500 prisoners were taken, and the bulk of the village was occupied. But a heavy counter-attack by fresh German troops recovered almost the whole of the village. On Wednesday, 28th, a lull occurred in the infantry fighting, though the German artillery still kept up a murderous hail of shell and gas shells. The number of prisoners had now reached 11,000, and of guns 160. The lull continued the following day except for the bombardment, and then on the last day of the month the storm broke.

**The Counter-Attack.**—Over the southern sector of the salient there had been no fighting for several days. On Friday morning there was a slight ground mist over this sector. The positions had not yet been thoroughly organised. There was no dense wire belt to penetrate before the Germans could break through, and hence it was that they could advance at almost the same moment that the bombard-

ment of gas shells began between Crèvecœur and Vendhuile. The line at the moment of attack lay near the outskirts of Crèvecœur, and about two miles east of Gonnellieu. The strength of the German attack was enormous. Fifteen new divisions had been brought up, and with the original five there were therefore twenty involved in the counter-attack. On a front of 17,000 yards or so over which the counter-attack was delivered, there were probably six divisions employed, and the exact sequence of events is still difficult to follow. The surprise was complete. Some of the front-line troops, men of the 55th and 12th Divisions, who had seen a long spell of hard fighting, gave way, and the first intimation some men had of the attack was the sight of crowds of grey-green troops marching upon them, although there had been no sound of struggle. Officers in the rear, comfortably taking their morning baths, heard a sudden noise, and found themselves compelled to escape half-dressed. A doctor actually made off in a bath-towel. Field artillery, and even guns behind the lines, found themselves constrained to fire point blank at advancing crowds of Germans.

Below Gonnellieu the Germans, dense masses of infantry followed by cavalry, penetrated the line almost at once, poured down Ravine 22, and reached Villers Guislain. The two brigades of the 55th Division holding this sector of the line were strung out over an extent of between five and six miles, and could not have checked so heavy an attack.

The Germans had been well drilled, and at once turned north-east, appearing on the rear of the 12th and 20th Divisions to the north. The gap widened, and was filled with more and more troops. Gonnellieu was penetrated, La Vacquerie reached. The advance even went past Gonnellieu and reached Gouzeaucourt, which was occupied. The troops carried with them a multitude of machine guns, and at once set about fortifying the territory gained. By about 10.30, however, the edge had been taken off the attack, and the Germans gave themselves to consolidation. A deep rent had been made in the line, and the advance had been brought to a standstill only by the rallying of all sorts of miscellaneous troops—labour battalions and even American engineers—who could be collected at a moment's notice.

But this represented only one-half of an extremely ambitious plan. About two hours after the launching of the sudden stroke the northern attack began. From Fontaine, east of the Cambrai road, to Mœuvres was the area of the northern assault. In extent it was about half that of the southern attack. Bourlon Wood at the moment of attack lay in a salient. We have seen that the troops were unable to retain Fontaine-notre-Dame. They had not succeeded in taking Mœuvres, and some seven divisions were thrown against this small sector of the line embracing Bourlon Wood and Mœuvres. From Mœuvres to Bourlon, a distance of not quite three miles, was attacked by three divisions. The bombardment had been heavy beyond all description. The little knoll of the wood was covered with high explosive and gas shells, and a curtain of shrapnel cut off the supports as far back as Havrincourt. The holding attack at Cantaing achieved little; but the struggle for the critical little salient which, dominating Cambrai, was in effect the main front of the British victory, was pitched on the heroic plan.

An account of this moving episode supplied to the press on February 21, 1918, shows that the troops involved in this struggle were the 47th (London) Territorial Division, the 2nd Division, and a brigade of the 56th (London) Territorial Division. They were holding the stretch of line between the Inchy-Louvel road and the east-



ern edge of Bourlon Wood, a distance of about five miles. The brigade of the 56th Division had already been severely tried in the last ten days' fighting, but the 2nd Division had only recently (the night of the 26th) taken over the line between Bourlon Wood and Mœuvres, and the 47th Division, which had been heavily engaged elsewhere, took over the positions in the wood two nights later. This division was cut off by the enemy's bombardment from the 2nd Division early in the attack, and about 9 A.M. the German infantry attacked this gap. They were caught full by the British barrage, but held on in spite of heavy loss and forced back the left flank of the 47th Division. Some elements of the 2nd Division were annihilated, and, as in the south, a rent appeared in the line.

The British field guns caught the Germans in the open, and cut swathes in their advancing lines; and as they pressed down to the Bapaume-Cambrai road, met them with machine-gun and Lewis-gun fire from the sunken road which bounds the wood on the west. The struggle went on until noon, when the Germans were thrown back to their old positions. Farther west the attack caught a company of the 17th Royal Fusiliers as it was evacuating an exposed post. Captain W. N. Stone, who was awarded the V.C. posthumously, stayed with Lieutenant Benzeery to cover the withdrawal of three platoons with a thin rearguard. These gallant men held off the full force of the enemy until the rear position of the main body had been organised. "Of the heroism of the rearguard," says the report of the officer commanding the 17th Fusiliers, "it is difficult to speak. Captain Stone and Lieutenant Benzeery, although ordered to withdraw to the main line, elected to remain with the rearguard. The rearguard was seen fighting with bayonet, bullet, and bomb to the last. There was no survivor. Captain Stone, by his invaluable information as to the movements of the enemy prior to the attack, and his subsequent sacrifice with the rearguard, saved the situation at the cost of his life. Lieutenant Benzeery was seen to be wounded in the head. He continued to fight until he was killed."

In front of the 2nd Division the attack was fought to a standstill; but the Germans re-formed and attacked the whole sector held by the right brigade of the 2nd Division, and again the heaviest losses were inflicted upon him by rifle and machine-gun fire at close ranges. Another attack was made over part of this same position early in the afternoon, and on the right flank of the 2nd Division three posts fell after their garrisons had been completely wiped out, and a gap was made in the line of the 47th Division. The dangerous situation was changed by the decisive action of the officers commanding these units, who, with a reserve company and a motley collection of staff officers, cooks, orderlies, and signallers, delivered a successful series of counter-attacks.

The slaughter inflicted upon the attackers over this front was enormous. When the posts lost by the detachments of the 2nd Division were recovered, it was difficult to find the bodies of their garrison in the terrible heaps of German dead that lay on the ground. Nearly a company of the 1st Royal Berks held their positions for six hours against repeated attacks made with such numbers and violence that they reached the British line before they could be brought to a standstill. The cool and deliberate fire threw back some of the attacks in wild disorder, and though the company suffered only forty-six casualties, they inflicted over 500 on the enemy.

In Bourlon Wood the position was terrible. The gas from the steady downpour of shells still hung about the thick undergrowth, and the men had to wear their

masks continuously. But their spirit was undimmed, and when the attack was made upon Bourslon Wood Lewis gunners ran out in front of the lines and took up positions from which they were able to work great havoc on the advancing infantry.

Far away to the left, the right of the 56th Territorial Division had passed through a similarly trying day. The Germans forced their way through the British line towards the Bapaume-Cambrai road south of Mœuvres, but in this crisis Captain A. M. C. McReady Diarmid, of the 17th Middlesex Regiment, took his company through a heavy barrage and drove back the Germans nearly a third of a mile with great casualties, taking a number of prisoners.

West of this position, where the flank of the new line lay, the struggle was also joined fiercely. At one moment the Germans penetrated to the battalion headquarters of the 8th Middlesex Regiment of the 168th Brigade. The commanding officer, with his Headquarters Staff, held off the assailants with bombs until a counter-attack could be delivered and the trench recovered. In the evening another heavy attack was made south-east of Mœuvres, which led to one of the most remarkable episodes of a struggle that was pitched in the heroic key. The Germans penetrated the British position and isolated a company of the 13th Essex Regiment (2nd Division) which lay along the west side of the Canal du Nord. The Germans, striving to widen the breach, were checked effectively by the 13th Essex and the 2nd South Staffords; but the company which was cut off very considerably helped in this success by their heroic stand. About 4 P.M., in the fast-failing light, the men saw clearly what were their chances of relief, and held a council to decide on their line of action. The two surviving officers, Lieutenant J. O. Robinson and Second-Lieutenant E. L. Corps, with the company sergeant-major and platoon sergeants, were present, and it was unanimously decided that there was to be no consideration of surrender. Two runners were sent through the German lines to inform the commanding officer, who duly received the message. Repeated attempts were made during the night to relieve the little band, but the Germans were in too great force, and the men "were heard fighting it out and maintaining to the last a bulwark against the tide of attacking Germans."

Along this vital northern sector at the end of the day the line was intact, except for a few advanced positions which were recovered later. The account upon which we have freely drawn for these details aptly sums up the point of this moving story: "the supreme importance of the resistance that can be offered by small parties of determined men who know how to use their weapons and are resolved to use them to the last." If the resistance had been the same over the whole of the front, there can be no doubt that the Germans would have been compelled to undertake another great retreat. But although this chance was virtually lost through the troops on the southern face of the salient giving way, the heroic men who held Bourslon Wood certainly brought the German plan to nothing. In the order of General von der Marwitz the scheme was clearly outlined. "The English, by throwing into the fight countless tanks on 20th November, gained a victory near Cambrai. Their intention was to break through, but they did not succeed in doing so, thanks to the brilliant resistance of our troops who were put into line to check their advance. We are now going to turn their embryonic victory into a defeat by an encircling counter-attack. The Fatherland is watching you, and expects every man to do his duty." The British line at the beginning of the attack formed a rough U in the German lines, the base pointing to Cambrai and



the arms to Mœuvres and Gonnellieu. It was the German plan to cut off the whole of the salient, with all the troops and stores that lay within ; and the attacks were skilfully and courageously pressed with the design of converging on a point west of Havrincourt. The southern attack was delivered first, in the hope that the immediate success due to surprise would make the holding of the more formidable northern sector more difficult. It was thought that the disorganisation due to the presence of advancing Germans in the very heart of the British positions would greatly facilitate the success of the northern attack. As a matter of fact, even the southern attack was not so successful as was planned, though it penetrated some distance past Gouzeaucourt, which lies due south of Bourlon Wood. There, however, it was held, and the Germans found that, just when they had planned that its leverage should be greatest, its force was spent.

The counter-attack in this area was delivered about 4 P.M. by the Guards, assisted by dismounted cavalry and tanks. The troops advanced as steadily as on parade, and speedily pressed the Germans back. In Gouzeaucourt the assailants had had time to organise machine-gun posts, and fierce detached battles went on in the streets ; but with the assistance of tanks the village was at length retaken, and the Guards even pressed close in to Gonnellieu. Darkness had fallen by this time, and it was impossible to do more ; but two-thirds of the guns left in German hands in the morning had been recaptured, and the Guards also took a number of prisoners. During the night the Germans made no further attempt to develop their plan. They had suffered extraordinary losses, and the British troops, who found so easy a mark in some places, grew physically sick of killing Germans. On 1st December Sir Douglas Haig was able to report in the evening that " from Masnières northward our positions are intact. . . . South of Crèvecœur the enemy succeeded in forcing his way into our lines on a considerable front, capturing a number of prisoners, and in places reaching our gun positions. Our reserve troops in the counter-attack have recaptured a great part of the ground taken by the enemy, and have to-day retaken the village of Gonnellieu and the St. Quentin spur to the south of that village. . . ."

On the same day nine separate attacks were delivered about Masnières, all of which were beaten off by the heroic 29th Division with heavy loss. In the ninth attack, the Germans succeeded in capturing Les Rues Vertes, on the west bank of the Scheldt Canal, but were driven off by an immediate counter-attack. The troops who held this position insisted that nowhere had so many Germans been killed in so small an area. But the village of Masnières made so sharp a salient in the German line that during the night it was evacuated, though the Germans on Sunday (2nd December) were still shelling it. The fighting extended again on Sunday to Gonnellieu, and the village was partly lost ; but at La Vacquerie and Bourlon the repeated attacks made no impression. On Monday La Vacquerie became the centre of the struggle, but the heavy casualties inflicted on the massed Germans there began to rival the records of Bourlon and Masnières. Two new German divisions were identified by the British on the southern face of the front. In the evening the line was slightly withdrawn at La Vacquerie and east of Marcoing. To the south of the latter place a momentary breach was made in the British lines, but it was repaired before nightfall. By 4th December La Vacquerie was once more in German hands, and the position between Masnières and Marcoing had been gravely impaired. But the major aim of the German Staff had failed definitely, and in view of this the readjustment of the British line ranks as insignificant, though it abandoned the

chance of a strategic victory. In the night Bourslon Wood was evacuated, and the line was withdrawn behind Marcoing. Again the evacuation was carried out without disturbance, and next morning the Germans not only shelled the old positions, but were seen cautiously feeling the British positions by patrols. Bourslon Wood, which will long live in history, had been so saturated with gas and so treated with shell that it was untenable. Conditions of life were impossible, and what was achieved for a few days could not be carried on continually. Unless the position could be improved by formidable counter-attacks, it was idle and wrong to spend life so lavishly upon it, and the command had not the troops to throw in for the effort required. By 8th December the battle had died down. The Germans had not secured the "victory" they had proposed, though they had inflicted a heavy defeat on the 3rd Army, securing 600 prisoners and 100 guns. The British had withdrawn from the positions which threatened the occupation of Cambrai; but they had compelled the Germans to call off the troops which would otherwise have been thrown against Italy, and they had inflicted losses upon the assailants that were felt by all to be extraordinary.

Such was the Battle of Cambrai, which left the British established in a piece of the Hindenburg Line; but the Germans had seized a part of the line which had been held by the Allied troops since the preceding March. Its importance was that Gonnellieu overlooked the British positions, and the concentration of troops and the preparations for counter-attack could readily be discovered. The Battle of Cambrai had also the effect of enlarging the area of possibility. If the most formidable lines could be overrun with such ease, there could be no assurance of stability. The Germans at once began to produce tanks which they had before affected to despise, and the approach of a great offensive was widely advertised. Russia had agreed to an armistice, and threatened to make peace. Numbers of divisions and guns were thereby liberated for service on the Western front, and Germany found the time ripe for a great press offensive. If one could have believed the neutral press, millions and millions of German troops were hastening to the Western front. A careful examination of the advertisement suggested that it was chiefly for moral effect, and unfortunately it achieved a measure of success. People in Great Britain, at any rate, could not understand why the army had made an attack without counting the cost and providing for it. They were intentionally kept in the dark as to what had really occurred, and such explanations as were forced from the British Ministers in Parliament, with their repeated assurances that all was as it should have been, simply darkened counsel. Rumour was allowed free rein, and it was not until the end of February that the heroic fighting of Bourslon was described in the press. But it is clear now that the dispositions were not all that they should have been; and if all the divisions had held so extended a line as the 55th, nothing could have saved the British army from a great disaster.

#### IV. THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM.

AFTER the two abortive attacks on Gaza the position in Palestine lay for some months unchanged. There was no intention of abandoning the offensive, but it was realised that too much preparation could hardly be given for the resumption



of the advance, since the problem of supply would certainly become more acute with success. General Allenby took over the supreme command from Sir Archibald Murray on 28th June. He had been recently in charge of the 3rd Army at the Battle of Arras, and his forceful personality added the deciding ingredient for a sweeping success. His report on the situation and his plan for the autumn campaign were approved by the War Cabinet, and preparations were pressed forward for the execution of the operations.

The first essential was improved communications. Reliance could not be placed upon motor transport because of the lack of good roads; and the steep banks of the wadis and the fewness of the tracks made wheeled traffic of any sort but a shaky support. There were some 30,000 pack camels, but these had to be allocated to the supply of a part of the eastern force which lay some fifteen to twenty miles from the railhead. The railway was pushed by Shellal towards Karm, and by Gamti to Buggar; and on the west towards the Wadi Ghuzze from Deir el Belah. Below the Karm railway track, which ran roughly parallel to the Gaza-Beersheba road, watering places were established at Khalasa and Asluj for the service of the mounted forces. Falkenhayn had reached Aleppo to redeem the Turkish situation, and his plan contemplated the maintenance of a defensive front between Gaza and Beersheba while an attempt was made to recapture Bagdad. It was a sound strategy, since Palestine was well organised; and the situation was made more secure by a skilful development of the railway system. Branch lines had been laid to Beit Hanun, five miles from Gaza, and Huj, some nine miles from Gaza and Sheria. There were good roads for motor traffic, no dearth of water, and a fertile country. Over the thirty miles from Gaza to Beersheba the defences were highly developed about the main road between the two places. "Gaza had been made into a strong fortress, heavily entrenched and wired, offering every facility for protracted defence." By the end of October the defences were practically continuous to a point south of Sheria; and though the defences of Beersheba remained a detached system, they had been improved and extended.

Allenby's intention being to attack the Beersheba group of defences in order to turn the line from the east, he was careful to give the impression that Gaza was still the British objective. There were several raids upon this part of the line during July and early August, and on the 30th of the month the line was advanced on a front of half a mile. The artillery and naval guns also devoted considerable attention to Gaza and its neighbourhood. The Turks, on their part, had become nervous of the railway activity towards Beersheba. Their aeroplanes, now considerably increased, brought back reports which patrols attempted to verify. A cavalry reconnaissance towards Buggar was driven back in the third week of July, and in September and October these raids became more frequent. A reconnaissance in force was made on 27th October towards Karm; but a handful of London Yeomanry, though surrounded, held out all day until the 53rd Welsh Division came up and put the Turks to flight. But by this time the bombardment of the Gaza defences had begun. Three days later, Rear-Admiral Jackson's squadron and the French ship *Requin* co-operated from the sea; and under cover of this threat the forces for the attack on the east were quietly concentrated. The New Zealand Mounted Rifles and Yeomanry and the Australian Light Horse had begun to concentrate on the 27th at Khalasa and Asluj; and while the forces for the frontal attack were marching in bright moonlight direct upon Beersheba, these troops

rode hard in a wide detour across the El Audja railway towards the eastern flank of Beersheba. In the early morning the troops were all in position. Two divisions lay between the Khalasa road and the Wadi es Saba; the Imperial Camel Corps and part of the 53rd Division lay north of the wadi. Mounted troops lay opposite the southern defences.

The battle began at dawn, and the London Territorials had seized the advanced works on Hill 1070 by 8.45, thus enabling the field guns to be brought up for the wire-cutting before the main position. At 12.15 the bombardment lifted, and the Territorials and dismounted Yeomanry opened the main attack. The dust had confused the aim, and prevented the artillery from destroying all the wire; but



The Gaza-Beersheba Front.

the troops, under a heavy and accurate fire, rushed forward, entering the trenches through the gaps in the wire. In three-quarters of an hour the whole of the defences south of the wadi had been captured. Meanwhile, the mounted force had established itself on the hills about Khasim Zanna, some five miles east of Beersheba. A detachment of Australian Horse rode north and secured Bir es Sakaty, commanding the Hebron road, and was engaged during the day to the north on the flank of the main force. Another column of Australian Horse with New Zealand Rifles, dismounted, crossed the gorge-like wadi, and, after a prolonged action, stormed the Saba hill, to the north, late in the afternoon. Saba village, below, was taken soon afterwards, and Beersheba lay before the troops across the plain. About seven o'clock, the 4th Australian Light Horse, after clearing a group of fortified build-



ings dismounted, took to horse, and rode at a gallop across two deep trenches into the town. Their bayonets were still fixed, and they used them as lances. But the resistance had already been broken, and the horsemen captured the position just as the Yeomanry from Khasim Zanna were ordered to attack. The battle was over, and Chetwode's force, with a total loss of less than 2,000, had opened a flank for the attack on the Hareira-Sheria position, and had captured 2,000 prisoners, 13 guns, much equipment, and rolling stock. Beersheba, at the outbreak of war, was a prosperous little settlement, with a population of about 1,000. During the war it became the advance depôt for the attack on Egypt, and had been connected with Hebron by a good road.

The second act in the operations for the reduction of the organised defences was an attack upon the Gaza sector in order to attract reserves from the Hareira-Sheria position. The artillery and the naval squadron had maintained their bombardment, though a monitor and destroyer fell victim to a U-boat, and *Requin* was hit by a shell which killed 9 and wounded 29 of her men. At 11 P.M. on 1st November part of the 52nd Lowland Division stormed Umbrella Hill, which lay about 2,000 yards south-west of Gaza, on the flank of the coastal attack. The main attack began four hours later, when the Turkish batteries had ceased to play upon Umbrella Hill. French and Italian detachments, with West Indian troops, assisted the East Anglians and Scots, when they went forward with a number of tanks. The major purpose of the attack was attained, but not all its objectives, and the losses on both sides were heavy. Sheikh Hasan, about one and a half miles north-west of Gaza, was captured; also the south-western defences of the town. Meanwhile, the eastern force, which was to have made its assault on the Hareira-Sheria position forty-eight hours after the Gaza attack, had found unexpected difficulties. One of the inducements to attack Beersheba had been the supposed excellent water supply; but though good, it was found to be less than was necessary, and the transport began already to be a cause of some anxiety. The troops, however, pushed north and west in order to protect the flank, and to gain room for easy deployment. The mounted troops pushed up the Hebron road. The 53rd Welsh Division, after a hard march, took up a line some six miles north of Beersheba, and on the 3rd advanced to Tel el Khuweilfeh, where the mounted troops had engaged considerable enemy forces the day before. For three days there was heavy fighting about this position and as far as the Hebron road—the German commander, Kress von Kressenstein, attempting with all his reserves to drive in the flank guard upon Beersheba, or compel such reinforcement that the main attack upon Hareira-Sheria would have been too weak to succeed. Three divisions were identified in this fighting, and the vigorous attacks imposed a great strain on the troops, but were unable to force Allenby to change his dispositions.

By the evening of the 5th, the preparations for the attack on the Hareira-Sheria positions were complete, and on the following day the attack was delivered at the same time that Tel el Khuweilfeh was assaulted. At daylight the dismounted Yeomanry advanced to the attack upon the eastern edge of the Kauwukah ridge, which runs between Hareira and the Beersheba-Sheria railway line. The Yeomanry suffered heavily in their attack upon the first line of trenches, but a little after noon had captured it, advanced nearly 3,000 yards, and taken the second line. It was about this time that the London Territorials and Irish troops began their attack on the south-eastern face of the ridge. The attack was a triumphant success, the

troops capturing also the defences of Rushdi, and at five o'clock entering Sheria station. Some 600 prisoners were taken, and the men advanced eight or nine miles. The whole of the elaborate defences on a seven-mile front were captured, and in the afternoon the Australian and New Zealand horsemen were ordered to pursue the retreating enemy to Huj. Meanwhile the Welsh Division had stormed a hill at Tel el Khuweilfeh at dawn, had been driven off it by a counter-attack, and finally had captured it and another hill with several hundred prisoners and some guns. The battle on this day proved decisive, and no small share in its success was due to the tenacity and fire of these Welshmen, who beat superior forces thoroughly in four days of continuous fighting. Some movement had been noticed at Gaza, but "nothing indicating a general retirement;" though the Turks slipped off during the night of the 6th, and only small rearguards barred the way to the north. The Hareira redoubt and Sheria were taken early on the morning of the 7th. On the Atawineh ridge the Turks still held out during the day, and the mounted troops found their way to Huj barred. But these were only rearguard actions to cover the retreat of the main body. Gaza, a city of some 40,000 inhabitants, was a flourishing place, with great historical associations. It was to Ali Muntar that Samson is supposed to have carried the gates of the city. Gaza had preserved its importance, and possessed German schools; but during the war it had been given over to the troops, who used its silks for sandbags and its furniture for dug-outs. The city had seen many conquerors, and had been a brief resting-place for Napoleon on his march up the coast.

From Atawineh the Turks faded away on the night of the 7th as skilfully as they had done from Gaza, and on the following day the airmen reported the beginnings of disorganisation in the retreating armies. The Scots pushed forward along the coast, crossed the Wadi Hesi against a vigorous resistance, and captured a ridge commanding the junction for the Huj railway line. Forced back four times, they were at length left in possession, while Indian cavalry captured prisoners and a howitzer at Beit Hanun, the railhead for Gaza. Farther east, below Huj, the Turks gave way under heavy pressure, and Worcester, Gloucester, and Warwickshire Yeomanry captured three 5.9 howitzers and nine field guns in a gallant charge. The guns were manned by Austrians, and all fell at their posts. Jemmamah and Huj were captured, and the centre achieved contact with the left flank. The Scots continued their march along the coast, passing, on the 9th, Ascalon, which was occupied by a handful of mounted troops. The immediate objective now became the railway junction of the Beersheba, Jerusalem, and Damascus lines. This taken, the Jerusalem army would be cut off from its supplies in the north. On the 10th, a vigorous attempt was made to relieve the pressure on the coastal sector by an attack from Hebron; but it was checked, and the Imperial Camel Corps moved north, so as to be on the flank of any further descent from the hills. For some days now the British troops conquered more by their victory over weariness, footsoreness, hunger, and thirst. Their steady marching under such conditions was one of the great feats of the war. Agonies were endured from lack of water. Men's lips cracked, and their tongues grew leathery and hard. Many of the horses succumbed to the strain. The problem of transport had at once become critical. But the pursuit did not pause. On the 12th the Lowland Division was in a position to attack the Turks, who had thrown an arc, stretching through El Kubeibeh (south-west of Ramleh), El Mughar, to Beit Jibrin, about the vital railway



junction. The Australian mounted troops on the same day reached Tel es Safi (Gath), and though driven back a short distance, were ready for the attack on the morrow. On the 13th, the new Turkish line, manned by some 20,000 rifles, and lying on the line of heights which were the sites of El Kubeibeh, El Mughar, and Katrah, was assaulted by the 52nd Division. Twice on the ridge and twice dislodged, the Scots made a third advance, and, accompanied by a gallant charge by Dorset and Bucks Yeomanry on the northern flank of El Mughar, they carried the position finally. Over 1,100 prisoners and three guns were taken. This engagement was decisive. There had been heavy fighting further south, and there was a stubborn resistance near the junction station. But on the morning of the 14th it was occupied, and the Turkish force was cut in two—one part retiring northwards, and another towards the east. "In fifteen days our force had advanced sixty miles on its right and about forty on its left. It had driven a Turkish army of nine divisions and one cavalry division out of a position in which it had been entrenched for six months, and had pursued it, giving battle whenever it attempted to stand, and inflicting on it losses amounting probably to nearly two-thirds of the enemy's original effectives. Over 9,000 prisoners, about 80 guns, more than 100 machine guns, and very large quantities of ammunition and other stores had been captured." \*

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The next phase in the campaign comprehended the capture of Jerusalem, but it was necessary first to secure the left or coastal flank by the occupation of the country as far as Joppa. During the 14th, the mounted troops pressed on towards Ramleh and Lydda, while the New Zealand Mounted Rifles fought a vigorous action at Ayun Kara, six miles south of Joppa. Under a skilful barrage the Turks advanced to within fifteen yards of the position, when the New Zealanders leaped from the trenches and put them to flight with the bayonet. On the next day another spirited engagement was fought south-east of Ramleh, where the ancient Gezer stands on a ridge. The position was attacked by the infantry from the west, and from the south by the Yeomanry, who had turned the tide of battle at El Mughar. The infantry met with a stubborn resistance, but on the approach of the Yeomanry the enemy began to retire. They were too late. With a fierce charge the horsemen were among them, sabring right and left, and taking 300 prisoners. In this charge fell Captain Neil Primrose, M.P., the brilliant son of a distinguished father. In the afternoon Ramleh and Lydda were captured, and before nightfall patrols were nearing Joppa. The following day Australians and New Zealanders occupied it without opposition. Joppa was the most important seaport in Palestine, though useless in stormy weather. The town creeps up high sandhills, and is surrounded by orchards and gardens.

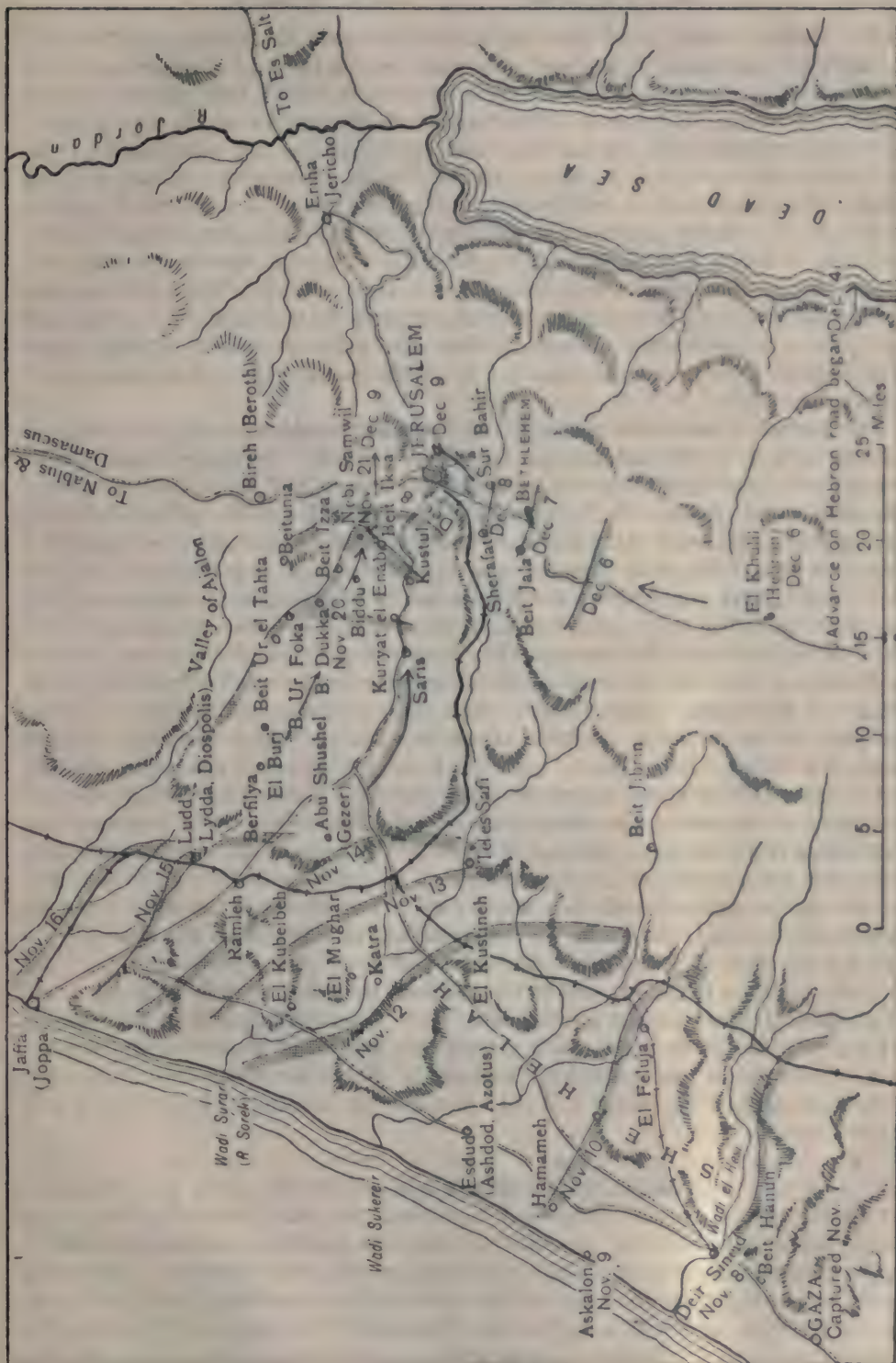
A pause was now necessary for the reorganisation of the communications, since the troops were far from the railhead, and were being supported by occasional supplies landed at the ports when the weather was favourable; but before the "position in the plain could be considered secure, it was essential to obtain hold of the one good road which traverses the Judæan ridge from north to south, from Nablus (Shechem) to Jerusalem." \* Chetwode's column turned eastward at once. The Yeomanry left the plain and entered the hills from Ramleh by Berfilya and Beit ur el Tahta (Lower Bethhoron) for Bireh, the site of Joshua's battle with the

Amorites. By the evening of the 18th the advance guard was at Beit ur el Tahta. The track had soon become unfit for wheeled traffic, and later for horses. On the 19th the infantry advance began. There was but one good road in this area—the Joppa-Jerusalem road—and the main column marched by this route, while another followed the old Roman road to the north. Australian horse covered the right flank of the advance. The main column passed through Anmas (Emmaus), and after an engagement in the defile at Saris, took Kuryat el Enab with the bayonet on the 20th. At this place the column split into two parts—one continuing to follow the Jerusalem road, making a demonstration towards the Holy City; and the other leaving it to march through Biddu on Bireh. By this time the northern column was at Beit Dukka. By the evening of the 21st the infantry had secured Neby Samwil ridge, the traditional site of Samuel's tomb, and could see the buildings of Jerusalem five miles to the south-east, while the mounted troops were but two miles from the Shechem road, fighting against a stubborn resistance.

Life in Jerusalem during those days could not be described as dull. Enver Pasha was in the city on the 12th. Djemal Pasha, on Enver's heels, had his train blown up, and took a distaste for further travel. Even Falkenhayn cast the halo of his prestige about the city. But it had been given up, and the roads became thick with the columns of uneasy refugees. The Turks, with a more immediate interest than the Germans, made up their minds to offer every resistance with the reinforcements which were promised and actually arrived. The British guns could only be brought up by almost superhuman labours, and there followed an enforced pause. But the Turks did not cease to attack. The Yeomanry had to fall back on the 22nd, and the troops on Neby Samwil ridge were hard pressed to retain the position. The advance was checked, but it had already achieved wonders. If the Turks had been given time to recover after the defeats on the west, these hilly defiles could have been held almost indefinitely.

In a fortnight, despite repeated attacks, reliefs had been carried out, new roads had been laid, supplies brought up, and the artillery placed in position. On 4th December Allenby set in motion the 53rd Division up the Hebron road. The Welshmen passed through Hebron unopposed on the 6th, and were due in Bethlehem on the following day. But the weather broke, and the hills were curtained in mist and the valleys aflood with the heavy rains. Bethlehem was not to be injured, and the Welshmen had to endure a heavy fire from it without the chance of reply. On the 8th, while the Welshmen were still held up by the weather, the northern columns began to advance. Despite the difficult nature of the ground and the bad weather, the London Territorials advanced two miles and turned north-east to the Shechem road; while on their right the troops had swung back and taken up a position one and a half miles west of Jerusalem, from which a galling fire was directed upon them. During the night the Turks began to withdraw, and early the next morning the Londoners and the Yeomanry cut the Shechem road, four miles north of Jerusalem; while the Welshmen, turning eastwards from the Bethlehem road, cleared the Mount of Olives and cut the road to Jericho. The city was isolated, and about eight o'clock the mayor advanced to the British lines under a white flag. General Allenby entered the Holy City on foot by the Jaffa Gate on the 11th. The guard at the gate represented all the nations engaged, and French, American, and Italian representatives accompanied the Commander-in-Chief to the citadel. There a proclamation was read out in English, French, Italian,





The Advance to Jerusalem

Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, and Russian offering freedom of worship to all faiths. Allenby then proceeded to the barrack square, where the city notables were presented. This ceremony over, the General left with his Staff, and one of the great moments of history had passed. The capture of Jerusalem resounded throughout the world as no other victory had done, and the effect was not diminished by the enemy attempts to explain it away. To the Zionist movement, with which Great Britain officially expressed its sympathy, it gave a hope of a new and glorious future. As a military achievement the capture of the city meant little; but the campaign in which it was secured was brilliant. "In the operations from 31st October to 9th December over 12,000 prisoners were taken. The total captures of material have not yet been fully counted, owing to the large area covered by these operations, but are known to include about 100 guns of various calibres, many machine guns, more than 20,000,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, and 250,000 rounds of gun ammunition."\*

The Turkish depreciation of the fall of Jerusalem would have rung truer if they had not made a determined attempt to recover the city. Jerusalem could not be securely held until the Turks were pushed farther away, and Allenby wanted elbow room also about Joppa. Bulfin's 21st Corps advanced the line about the latter place in the fourth week of the month. The 52nd Division crossed the Auja on the night of 20th-21st in three columns, and rushed the high ground beyond without firing a shot. For some nights previous a heavy bombardment had been carried out, and when it began on the 20th, the Turks, schooled to expect it, paid no attention. When the Scots had crossed, they took the garrisons by surprise. But in the Jerusalem sector the positions could not be improved before the Turkish counter-attack was delivered. Turkish and German reinforcements had reached the front, and just before midnight on 26th December the 3rd Corps, composed of fresh troops, one division being drawn from the Caucasus, attacked down the Shechem road, while another corps advanced from Jericho. But neither attack secured more than a temporary advantage, and at 6.30 A.M. on the 27th Yeomanry and Irish troops (10th Division) counter-attacked on the flank of the northern advance. Under this fierce onslaught the thrust against Jerusalem was diverted to the west. But the British troops forced their way forward, and when, on the 28th, a general advance was ordered, the Turks were driven back three miles on the west and six miles on the east of Jerusalem. Beitunia, the scene of a month's struggle, was stormed; El Ram (Ramah), east of the Shechem road, fell the following day; and Beitan (Bethel) was occupied on the 30th. Over 1,000 Turkish corpses were buried, and 750 prisoners were taken, with a total loss under the number of the Turkish dead. Never again was Jerusalem threatened. For seven weeks there was a lull in the fighting, and the troops had only to suffer the hardships of the bitterly cold and wet season.

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In February 1918 the Egyptian railway system was connected with Palestine, and the Egyptian Labour Corps had improved the road sufficiently to justify Allenby's next advance. On the 19th, the Australians and New Zealanders, with the London Territorials, moved through the stony gullies towards Jericho. Advancing swiftly on the right, the mounted troops were soon at Neby Musa, five miles south-east of Jericho; and with a battalion of Londoners they succeeded in capturing



the position early on the morning of the 21st. Meanwhile the infantry had fought their way against a stubborn resistance on prepared positions up to the historic town, and at 8.20 A.M. the Australian Horse rode into it unopposed. The troops pushed forward to the Wadi Anja, north of Jericho, to the Jordan on the east, and established themselves on the western shores of the Dead Sea. With this victory the conquest of southern Palestine was complete.

No further advance could be made without a considerable reorganisation of the transport. Meanwhile, to assist the King of Hedjaz in his attacks east of the Dead Sea, Allenby undertook a series of raids, having for their objective the cutting of the roads from Judæa to the Jordan valley. The purpose was only partly achieved; but the positions over the whole of the front were improved during the heavy fighting in March, when the redoubtable Falkenhayn was replaced by General Liman von Sanders.

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Meanwhile the position in Mesopotamia had been improved. In that area the British had no obvious objective worth the possession. The capture of Mosul would have imposed an almost unendurable strain upon the already overburdened communications. The Ford vans, which supplied the advanced positions, were no adequate stand-by, and a force weakened in this vital way would have challenged attack. But in order that as many troops as possible might be immobilised in Mesopotamia and Allenby's task thereby lightened, it was necessary that Maude should adopt the offensive. The Tigris column, in the centre, fought three engagements, and only succeeded in driving the Turks north of Tekrit. In the second, on 3rd November, a determined attempt was made to cut off the Turks; but the night march of the cavalry lost direction, and the enemy again eluded Maude's grip. On 18th November, General Maude, one of the finest figures thrown up by the war and a soldier of genius, died of cholera.

General Marshall, who had already won fame under Maude, was given the command, and carried on the established tradition of success. In December another battle was fought, in the Jebel Hamrin hills, in co-operation with Bikaroff's volunteer Cossacks; and by the 6th the Turks were forced to retire up the Mosul road by a threat of envelopment. Two months later the left flank began to advance, and on March 9, 1918, Hit, with its odorous bitumen wells, was entered and the road to Tekrit cut. The aeroplanes added a final incentive to retreat, and the Turks fell back up the Euphrates upon Khan Bagdadi. Militarily, the position was little changed by these movements, for the Turk had become an adept in fading away before attempts to pin him down. But his prestige sank lower and lower, and the final act was swift and overwhelming.

## V. THE VERSAILLES COUNCIL.

THE Italian defeat brought to a head the discontent of most of the people of the Allies with the conduct of the war. Every one had realised that it was impossible the Allies should achieve decisive results in 1914 and 1915; but in 1916 there was a great force available, and if decisive results could not be achieved then, at any rate they might be reasonably expected in the following year. And yet in the

tenth month of 1917 the Allies had suffered a reverse that touched them more nearly than any of the war. The Russian defeats of 1915 had been lived down, and most people refused to believe that Russia might not still recover her military power, even when the Kerensky Government seemed unable to resuscitate it. The overrunning of Servia and the defeat of Rumania, even the reduction of Kut, touched people far less than the Italian defeat; for it seemed incredible that the British could continue to exercise their maximum pressure about Ypres and still leave the Germans time and force to invade Italy. At the beginning of November the Italian retreat was still continuing, and the retiring armies were withdrawing from the Tagliamento, where popular opinion expected them to stand. Where would they stand was the question that fermented in people's minds. That this question was not confined to the masses is proved by the fact that, when the Italians were withdrawing from the Tagliamento, the French Premier, M. Painlevé, with M. Franklin-Bouillon and General Pétain, visited England and had a conference with Mr. Lloyd George. The visit was followed immediately by the departure for Italy of the British Premier and his military advisers. Mr. Lloyd George left England on 4th November, and with him went General Smuts, Sir William Robertson (Chief of the Imperial General Staff), General Sir Henry Wilson (who had been chief liaison officer with the French Staff), General Maurice (Director of Military Operations), and a number of other officers. General Robertson travelled through to Italy, and there met General Foch, the French Chief of Staff. On 5th November a conference was held at Rapallo, about sixteen miles from Genoa, and there were present Mr. Lloyd George, M. Painlevé, Signor Orlando (the Italian Premier), the three Chiefs of Staff, Generals Smuts and Wilson, and a number of other Italian officers.

The conference was the most momentous for the Allies of any yet held in the war. The whole situation was thoroughly reviewed, and on 7th November an announcement was made that the conference had proved the perfect solidarity of the Allies. Two days later there appeared in an Italian newspaper an announcement which first foreshadowed the important resolutions that the conference had reached. The report stated that the Western front from the Channel to the Adriatic was to have a permanent Council, upon which all the Allies should be represented—Britain by Sir Henry Wilson, France by General Foch, and Italy by General Cadorna. The last mentioned was to be succeeded in the chief executive command by General Diaz. The report of the decision at once set afoot anxious discussion in England. At one time or another there had been rumours that a Generalissimo was to be appointed for the front in France and Belgium, and the Rapallo decision seemed to some to foreshadow the actual appointment of such an officer. General Nivelle had, indeed, held that position, and many students saw in his brilliant failure and its consequent prejudicing of the British offensive their worst fears confirmed. For hardly any one failed to realise that it was not on its military side the arrangement was weak. There could be little doubt that some effective unified control would offer numerous advantages militarily; but what would happen if a French general should order a British attack which should fail as disastrously as that of General Nivelle in April?

To the personnel of the new military Council few could object. General Sir Henry Wilson was reputed a brilliant officer. He was an Irishman who had been a keen student of the problem of a war on the Continent, and he had been General



Murray's assistant when he acted as Chief of Staff to Sir John French. He had served a considerable period as chief liaison officer at French headquarters, and was well known and liked among the French High Command. General Cadorna had shown himself an able strategist, and his recent failure had depreciated his prestige unduly. He had seen at once that in the presence of this factor the only thing to do was to retreat, and his proved ability in the preceding period was too easily brushed aside. Of General Foch it is difficult to speak too highly. He was a strategist of European reputation before the war, and his period as a corps and divisional commander had proved him to be as bold and sure in decision as he was brilliant and suggestive in military theory. But the assembling of such a trio was suggestive in itself. Foch was Chief of the French Staff, and there could, therefore, be no duality of counsel there. Wilson, however, stood in an undefined position to the British Chief of Staff, and there was ample room for speculation as to their relative rôles. According to an Order in Council, General Sir William Robertson held an unique position, and "in addition to performing such other duties as may from time to time be assigned to him by the Secretary of State," he was "responsible for issuing the orders of his Majesty's Government in regard to military operations." How did Sir Henry Wilson fit into that scheme? General Cadorna was similarly in a strange position with regard to his nation's army, which had an accredited Commander-in-Chief and Chief of Staff other than himself.

This was the burning theme raised by the Rapallo Conference. It had other effects. While it was sitting, British and French troops were pouring into Italy; and as a result of the frank exchange of views, the British and French determined to allocate some of their best units to this sector of the front. General Plumer, who had won the brilliant victory of Messines Ridge, was put under orders with the whole of his Staff, including General Harington, who had proved himself to be one of the most brilliant Staff officers on the Western front. General Fayolle, who had fought on the right of the British in the Battle of the Somme, and later in Nivelle's Champagne offensive, was ordered to take charge of the French units. But these facts were not known at the moment. Mr. Lloyd George, on his way back from Italy, electrified the world and amazed his countrymen by an astounding speech at Paris, which confirmed the worst suspicions of many who did not regard him with undiluted favour. It had long been reported that the Prime Minister was intent on some new military adventure, and on Monday, 12th November, he seemed to give colour to the rumour. He said himself that he had spoken with "perhaps brutal frankness," but there need be no reservation in the matter. In effect he put the most depressing view of the situation to his hearers at Paris, though whether this was "frankness" or an elaborate camouflage to cover his true designs no one could tell. He began by surveying the situation, and asking whether we had achieved as much as we might reasonably have expected to achieve. He paid full tribute to the courage and tenacity of the Allied soldiers, and said the fault was clearly not with them. "No! the fault has not been with the armies; it has been entirely due to the absence of real unity in the war direction of the Allied countries." If he had been content to develop this theme, his speech would have been more useful but less provocative and disturbing. He stated that the apparent concerting of plans together had achieved nothing, since the respective advisers would inevitably be sensitive about tendering advice, still more support, for any sector not under their own immediate control." And so it happened that when

the plans were worked out in the terrible realities of war, the stitches came out and the disintegration was complete. So far the thesis seemed feasible enough; but he then proceeded to apply it to all the mishaps of the war. It was due to this, he suggested, that Germany had been permitted to break through Serbia "whilst we were hammering with the whole of our might at the impenetrable barrier in the West." "It is true we sent forces to Salonika to rescue Serbia; but, as usual, they were sent too late. . . . Half of those forces sent in time—nay, half the men who fell in the futile attempt to break through on the Western front in September of that year—would have saved Serbia, would have saved the Balkans, and completed the blockade of Germany."

But one might reasonably have asked him how lack of unity of command led to the sending of forces *too late*. It might be adduced to explain the complete failure to send forces, but not the delay. And to take his view the Prime Minister was ignoring the disastrous policy which was followed by his Government, and led to the adherence of Bulgaria to the enemy. Further, there was again the bankruptcy of the Government of the time when faced by the possibility of securing Greece as an ally. How could the Allies get to Serbia without the help of Greece? And if they could secure so much help, why could they not induce her to go to the assistance of Serbia? Unity of command did not touch the real issues of this thorny subject. Mr. Lloyd George, however, went on to explain the failure of Rumania as due to the same cause, the failure of Italy, and the whole of the campaign of 1917. How could unity of control have prevented disaffected soldiers giving way? The fact was, General Cadorna expected the attack, and felt quite confident of his ability to deal with it. What could the greatest unity in the world have done to avert the disaster? The German Staff control had not prevented the Austrian collapse in the summer of 1916. It had restored the line fifty miles farther into Austrian territory precisely as the Allies were doing in Italy. "If Europe had been treated as one battlefield, the failure of one whole flank would necessarily have made a difference to our strategic arrangements." But for this adhesion to the first strategic plan of 1917 in spite of the collapse of Russia, Mr. Lloyd George was as responsible as any one. He was merely indulging in the easiest form of criticising after the event, and the case was much too serious for such an indulgence. "When we advance a kilometre into the enemy's lines, snatch a small shattered village out of his cruel grip, and capture a few hundreds of his soldiers, we shout with unfeigned joy." The worst that can be said of this generalisation is that it was true. It was not only unpopular to moderate the enthusiasm over small successes: it was even thought to be treacherous. But, in admitting this, it is unnecessary to agree to the whole of Mr. Lloyd George's inferences.

It was suggested that what was needed was the recognition of the essential unity of the Allied fronts, and apparently this simple lesson would have done away with the possibilities of a disaster like Caporetto. This was indeed a hard saying. Its only possible justification—and this perhaps the Premier thought—was that people would be less disturbed in the long run if they were assured that a simple expedient would prevent a recurrence of the disaster. There is a sense in which the indefinite is the most terrifying of all things. Conceive the worst evil, if it is circumscribed it is more tolerable than the feeling that causes are at work which can neither be defined nor recognised. Whatever may have been Mr. Lloyd George's intention, the effect of the speech was clear enough. By some who had persistently



favoured the Eastern strategy it was hailed with pronounced satisfaction, and the policy at which it aimed was thought by a few to be full of promise, though in the British press the same confusion was made between unity of control and the choice of an Eastern strategy which had been evident in the Premier's speech. One phrase of that speech seemed to contain the whole of the chief point. Mr. Lloyd George had said that he hoped the new Council would have "real powers." At once Mr. Bonar Law was asked to explain, and he was careful to insist that the Prime Minister did not mean that it would have any *executive* or overriding powers.

But the criticism in the press continued, and from it might be gleaned how little confidence was reposed in Mr. Lloyd George. On 14th November, in answer to a question of Mr. Asquith, he found it advisable to read the terms of the agreement between the Allies. It consisted of eight clauses. The second thus stated the rôle of the Supreme Council: "to watch over the general conduct of the war, to prepare recommendations for the decision of the Governments and to keep itself informed of their execution, and to report thereon to the respective Governments." The fourth gave to the Council an amending power over the general war plans "drawn up by the competent military authorities." But apart from this the document seemed innocuous, and yet the distrust continued. The *Times*, which supported the scheme with reserve, pointed out that instead of unity the Council produced dissension. There was a confusion of jurisdictions, and it was no solution of the Allied position to appoint a new adviser to the Prime Minister, instead of dismissing the Chief of Staff if his policy were not to be accepted and followed. Indeed, throughout the criticism, the fear lurked that Mr. Lloyd George was not inaugurating a new unity, but was really endeavouring to launch a new strategy. On the following Monday, 19th November, Mr. Asquith gave expression to some of the doubts which were causing widespread anxiety. In effect, his argument was that no purpose was to be served by the new Council unless it were designed to serve a purpose which the Prime Minister had repudiated and the Chief of Staff did not desire. In his reply Mr. Lloyd George claimed that no soldiers had ever been less interfered with by politicians than the British, and that there is a vast sphere where the politician must have the deciding voice. No one indeed objected to this thesis, but what people feared was that under a pretence of supporting the soldiers Mr. Lloyd George would simply do what Mr. Churchill had done with Lord Fisher—devise his own strategy, and secure the Staff's reluctant acquiescence.

There was much ground for this inference. There can be little doubt that the first proposition was that the Council should have executive powers; and when M. Clemenceau found that this was not to be the case, he at once removed Foch from it and placed in his stead General Weygand, a comparatively unknown officer. Furthermore, the chief supporters of Mr. Lloyd George's scheme were open advocates of an Eastern strategy, and were as eager to attribute all the ills suffered by the Allies to a "Western" strategy as Mr. Lloyd George was to put them against lack of unity of control. The *Manchester Guardian's* military critic actually charged everything to this choice. He stated that the General Staff had never taken a view of the war as a whole—that instead of controlling the General Headquarters Staff in France it had merely reflected the Staff's view; and this in spite of the fact that Bagdad had been taken and Jerusalem had just fallen under the same Staff. Any dispassionate onlooker might have wondered at the madness of some of these suggestions, and in the new year they were more violently stated than ever. The Battle

of Cambrai, with its immediate falsification of the Prime Minister's speech as regards the "impenetrable wall" of the Western front and its amazing sequel, put a truce to the discussion for the time being. But the dissatisfaction at the developments at Cambrai seemed later even to add fuel to the flames.

The *Daily Mail* began a campaign of criticism directed against the General Staff, and apparently by inference the Higher Command. Mr. Lovat Fraser stated that the Allies had been hammering always against the strongest point of the enemy. It was the weak point which should have been chosen. One might have thought that even the General Staff could have seen that. But Mr. Fraser insisted that he knew generals, and apparently they could not be trusted to know that it is unwise to choose the strongest point of the enemy. It did not seem to occur to the critics that the enemy might choose to be strongest in the *decisive* direction, and that the very reason why some campaigns made more headway was that they could have little, if any, influence upon the decision. Nor did it appeal to these critics that if only seven per cent. of food ships had been sunk during 1917 the shortage suffered by them must be due to the use of ships for military purposes, and therefore any further use, such as a new campaign might necessitate, might reduce the food shortage to a critical point. The campaign went on, and aroused much indignation among fair-minded people. In the second week of February a report announced that the powers of the Council had been enlarged, and it began to be rumoured that the Prime Minister and Sir William Robertson did not agree. People at once saw the reason of the press campaign against the Chief of Staff.

On 12th February Mr. Asquith opened a debate on the subject of the new powers. He first of all touched upon the reply to the speeches of Count Hertling and Count Czernin, and then proceeded to deal with the question of the hour. "There has been nothing done and left undone which has in the least shaken the confidence of the nation and the Empire in the two great soldiers—Sir Douglas Haig, our Commander-in-Chief, and Sir William Robertson, the head of our General Staff at home." He then quoted the assurance given by Mr. Lloyd George in November: "From the foregoing it will be clear that the Council will have no executive power. The final decisions in the matter of strategy and the dispositions and movements of the various armies in the field will rest with the several Governments of the Allies." What, then, did the report mean by stating that the functions of the Council had been enlarged? Mr. Bonar Law had excused himself from answering by suggesting that it was not in the public interest to do so. How far did the enlargement of functions go? He distrusted the "confiding to a body of this kind anything in the nature of executive power." In his reply Mr. Lloyd George gave as little information as possible, though some of it was of great importance. He stated that, in view of the Russian failure and the consequent increase of the German strength on the West, it was imperative that the whole strength of the British, French, and Italian armies should be available to repel any attacks on the West. He then went on to suggest that Mr. Asquith was asking for information "which any intelligence officer on the other side would gladly pay large sums of money to get"—a suggestion that Mr. Asquith at once repudiated. Mr. Lloyd George as quickly as possible explained away his false step, but continued to insist that he could not answer the question without giving information to the enemy. The decision come to had been approved by Sir Douglas Haig and Sir William Robertson; he had nothing to do with the press attacks—and so on. In the meantime Colonel Repington, the former military



correspondent of the *Times*, had left that paper, and in the *Morning Post* gave what purported to be an account of the real decisions at Versailles. The Council had been invested with executive powers. Foch had thereupon returned to it, and was in effect a Generalissimo, while General Anthoine, who had co-operated on the left of the British advance in the Battle of Ypres, had succeeded him as Chief of Staff to Pétain. The reserves had been taken out of the control of the local command. In the French papers it was stated that a general reserve had been formed and placed under General Foch. Colonel Repington and the *Morning Post* were at once prosecuted, and ultimately both were fined.

But before this had been consummated the controversy about the Staff and its Chief had been decided. In spite of Mr. Lloyd George's assurance, it became certain that Sir William Robertson did not agree with the decisions of the Council; and even when the Premier was giving the assurance, Sir Henry Wilson was in England, and it was reported that the position of Chief of Staff had been offered to Sir Herbert Plumer. On 17th February General Robertson was announced to have resigned; but he bluntly stated that he had done nothing of the kind. On the following day the Prime Minister made in Parliament the statement he had refused to make a week before. It was gathered that Sir William Robertson had been dismissed after two offers had been refused. He was offered the position of British representative at Versailles—Mr. Lloyd George apparently thinking that, as he was a convinced Westerner, he might as well be relegated to the West. Or, alternatively, he was offered the position of Chief of Staff, as it was before the powers were increased by the Order in Council in 1915. Mr. Lloyd George claimed that only late in the day had he learned with surprise that General Robertson did not agree with the Versailles decisions. The Chief of Staff had held that the Versailles General should be his deputy; but this was impossible, said the Premier, since the British representative must be able to act independently. The telephone seemed to be forgotten for the moment, for he laid great stress on the fact that Versailles is a hundred miles away. And the objection seemed of little weight when it was learned that the Chief of Staff was still to be the chief adviser of the Government in case the military representatives at Versailles disagreed, or the orders of the Council were not approved of by the Commander-in-Chief. Under these circumstances the decision would be represented to the Government, who would take the advice of the Chief of Staff before replying. Under such circumstances the Chief of Staff might as well be a thousand miles away. The impression gained by the public was that the Prime Minister was not wholly ingenuous in most of these "confessions." All that one could gather was that the Council had some sort of executive powers which Lord Curzon said would have to be increased, and that the duties of the Chief of Staff had been diminished. The net result indeed was that the Premier obtained two advisers, and could choose between them. He had, moreover, secured a sort of limited liability with regard to France and Italy. The British adviser at Versailles, and even General Foch, could not dispose of forces which were in England; nor could they claim any forces not at the moment in Belgium, France, or Italy. The unity of front meant "unity of the Western front." The Chief of Staff in England would in the future, as in the past, control the troops outside of the West sector; and as these were alone under his immediate control, he might reasonably be expected to favour an Eastern offensive on the grand scale.

Sir William Robertson had felt the weakness and the perils of the whole position, and he made the Prime Minister dismiss him rather than resign from a position which

he could have held though without the powers he felt to be necessary, or accept the position at Versailles of which he had never approved. But he proved to the world the disinterestedness of his motives by accepting the comparatively inferior position of the Eastern Command, and within a fortnight was making good-humoured speeches at Lincoln. Of the chief actors in the drama he came out best, and by his prudence, persistence, and disinterestedness increased his already great prestige. Sir Henry Wilson became Chief of Staff, and Sir Henry Rawlinson took his position at Versailles. Rawlinson was one of the war's romances. He seemed to come in for far more than his share of fighting from those first days when he commanded the 4th Corps for the relief of Antwerp, and found himself received with incredible enthusiasm as he marched through Belgium in the early days of October 1914. Later he fought through the terrible days at Ypres, and found his 7th Division less by 10,000 men when it was withdrawn from the line. He was present at Neuve Chapelle and at Loos, and took the bulk of the fighting on the Somme. Finally, it was a detachment of his army which suffered the blow on the coastal sector in July 1917. He was not a genius. But from the dispatches of French and Haig we gather that he was neither rash nor lacking in courage. He was possessed of a good wearing competence which had met a hundred tests in a variety of experiences, and no doubt he was a good choice. General Cadorna was replaced by General Giudini, a Staff officer of note, and the Council settled down to work.

## VI. THE BLOCKADE OF THE ALLIES.

THE intervention of the United States had made it certain that sooner or later the Germanic Allies must come to terms, since with the United States the centre of gravity of the war was transferred beyond the borders of Europe. Until this time the German rulers had thought to secure a military decision in Europe, and with it victory. They had not realised that the whole atmosphere of war had changed, and that it had become more and more, for a power which held the seas, an armed boycott. While the Allies could maintain their forces in the field or fend off the Germanic Powers from the oceans' highways they were victorious. What matter if they should give ground everywhere provided they maintained their hold over the future of Germany and their will not to make peace until they were satisfied. The resumption of normal life in Germany lay in their hands, and all the rest was irrelevant. The entry of the United States into the war, and with her of the American powers and China, simply set the final seal to the Allies' control of the world's markets. Yet in 1918 the Germans proposed to make another bid to achieve victory in the field. The onus lay on them to compel the Allies to accept peace, for despite the peace with Russia they realised that they were no nearer the normal rhythm of life than before. The submarine campaign had not compelled the Allies to make peace, and it was not then realised that it was simply this final will to victory which held the Allies in their victorious position. They could always have bartered their pawns against the Germans, but while they refused they were victorious; and if the British and Americans were driven from France, they could continue the war indefinitely with greater ease than Germany.

Yet though the submarine campaign had not effected what its supporters had promised, it had done more than the Allies wished. The critical days had passed,



and it was no longer feared that the Allies would have to make terms owing to lack of shipping. The wide use of depth charges, and particularly the adoption of the system of convoy, had solved the problem. The submarines were being sunk and the shipping was escaping more and more ; but the entry of America into the war at once threw a greater weight upon the Allied shipping. Where the tonnage had been adequate before to keep Britain from feeling the pinch, it was now far from adequate. And the debacle in Italy had compelled Britain to share the food more equitably. Add to this that more coal was also to be sent to Italy, and we have an *ensemble* of conditions which led to the shortage of food in Britain. Neutrals had long been suffering from an absolute shortage of many things : coffee, wheat, corn, oil, milk, and meat. In Italy the food riots in August 1917 had been connected with the breakdown on the Isonzo. But the state of the Italians was not nearly so bad as that of the northern neutral nations. It was only in the autumn of 1917 that rationing schemes began to be enforced. The world was in fact faced with a shortage of wheat and meat, and it is astonishing that the growing shortage of transport had accentuated this shortage so late. Even to the end of 1917, the consumption of meat per head in Britain averaged nearly 2½ lbs. per week. But in the second half of 1917, when Mr. Herbert Hoover, the former organiser of the Belgian Relief Commission, and Mr. W. J. Hanna, the Canadian Food Controller, began to take up their work seriously, they estimated that the shortage of wheat for European consumption amounted to 400 million bushels.

Rationing, therefore, was a plain necessity. Sweden was the first after Germany to begin rationing, and in 1915 instituted a scheme for rationing the poorer families. In 1916, sugar was rationed generally, and bread in January 1917. Holland was next with rationed bread in the spring of 1917, when France had begun to ration sugar. By October Italy and Switzerland joined the rationed Powers. At this time Germany was rationed for almost everything, even boots and clothes. Britain, depending as she did on imports for two-thirds of her food supplies, to the end of 1917 remained beyond this creeping shadow of starvation. In October 1916 there had been attempts to secure control of the staples of life for the Allies, and at the end of 1917 Sir William Goode, the liaison officer between the British Food Controller and those of the United States and of Canada, stated that the Allied co-operation had, almost unknown to the public, effected an unparalleled economic revolution by diverting the vast imports from North America of nearly all food commodities from private into Government control. Mr. Hoover, on the American side, was also effecting economies in the consumption of food ; and that this was necessary we can gather from the figures of the European shortage. Lord Rhondda put the minimum food import at ten million tons in 1918 ; and from this may be seen the possibilities of the submarine campaign.

To deal with this vast dependence upon imports from abroad the Government attempted to increase the acreage under tillage. Allotments sprang up everywhere, and powers were granted local agricultural committees to break up grass land. It was intended to bring a million and a half acres under cultivation in 1917, and three times this area for cereals and potatoes in 1918. This acreage would have provided all the cereals required by the country even when allowance had been made for live stock and seed. To meet the necessary demand of more labour, nearly 100,000 women were put on the land by the end of 1917, and in the spring of 1918 the " Women's Land Army " made a call for further recruits. In their attractive cos-

tumes the women paraded the towns, and secured numerous recruits of the right sort, despite the counter claims of the W.A.A.C.S. and the W.R.E.N.S. and the W.R.A.F.S. But the ambitious scheme did not prove wholly successful, and dilution of the wheat flour was allowed and encouraged. Throughout all, the loaf was not allowed to go beyond the ninepenny standard ; though to achieve this Government subsidy was required. But the repercussion of the diversion of grain to home consumption led to the decrease of meat, eggs, and milk. Cattle were not allowed to be fed upon wheat, barley, rye, or rice ; the production of beer was reduced, and in the late spring the fate of dogs was being considered. Towards the end of 1917 a campaign for economy in food was in full swing. In many windows appeared the legend : " In honour bound we adopt the scale of voluntary rations." But the voluntary scale was too generous. The two pounds of meat which was suggested as the maximum consumption could not be obtained. Meat shops were shut on many days of the week, and in November the food queue made its appearance. The queues were found in many quarters of London about tea shops and grocers, and especially about butchers. It was not a question of price, though at the end of 1917 the prices of staples had risen about sixty per cent., and this despite the fact that there were maximum prices for sugar, butter, milk, meat, margarine, lard, pork, bacon, potatoes, cheese, rabbits, cattle fodder, jams and jellies, oils, and dried fruits. It was to some extent a question of distribution, but more a question of actual shortage. Supplies across the North Sea withered and dried up in the blight of the maximum prices. To meet the evils of bad distribution, a large scheme of local control had been instituted in 1917. England, Scotland, and Wales were divided into fifteen districts, under Divisional Commissioners, and local administrative bodies were asked to help. They had powers granted them of controlling the distribution of locally grown produce, and did on occasion prevent food going out of the district, and sell it at agreed prices. The food queue in November and December produced some friction ; and it was not easy to explain the cause of the sudden shortage. But the reverses in Italy and its antecedents are sufficient to indicate where the former surplus was going. There were some protests in working centres at the shortage of butter and margarine ; and there were a few deaths from exposure in the queues. Local rationing schemes were in force in some parts of the country before the end of the year, but in January 1918 a pronounced shortage of meat occurred. In February, accordingly, a comprehensive rationing scheme was in force over London and the home counties, which comprised some 14,000,000 people. Sugar, butter and margarine, and meat were the only foods rationed up to May. The scheme involved registration with some local dealer and the issue of cards. For meat, cards divided into squares were issued. Four squares could be used per week, and two for children under ten years of age. Three could be used for butcher meat and one for bacon. Each square was equal to fivepenceworth of meat, though in April the number available for meat was reduced, and more bacon could be had.

In restaurants, which had been compelled some time before to adopt two meatless days per week, little meat was to be found. The restaurants were also limited as to the amount of food which could be supplied at each meal. Birds, including chicken, could be had more reasonably. A chicken, for instance, could be had in April for three coupons, but the price was about 2s. 6d. a pound for boiling fowls. The food restrictions were, on the whole, received well. As soon as it was realised that all were faring alike, the working classes ceased to grumble, though there was



some ill-feeling until the heavier workers were graded differently. This was organised with some thoroughness in April, and there were certain exceptions for people in ill health. In Germany the food rationing system had led to an astounding outbreak of forgery. The delicately watermarked tickets of Munich were imitated with great ease, and the Government found itself faced with a considerable shortage owing to over consumption. This phenomenon does not seem to have made its appearance in Great Britain, although it was difficult to prove the fact, for there was really none but the roughest and most approximate attempt at checking. What was discovered was "food hoarding," which meant the retention of stocks of food for more than a very short time. The "ordinary requirements" of the household was the ambiguous term under which this test was officially described; but it was so loose as to cover theoretically a number of cases which were heavily fined. A well-known novelist was fined £50 and twenty guineas costs for keeping a hundred-weight of sugar. And there were other cases of greater breaches of the rule which met with heavier penalties.

But, on the whole, the scheme was loyally worked, and it was realised that this late beginning of rationing was luxury compared with the state of things in Germany and Austria, despite the ever-new promises of alleviation from the Ukraine or Rumania. The blockade was less the cause of this than the stimulated consumption of the troops—for the troops were always well fed, and the British soldiers were, in the late spring of 1918, receiving huge supplies of meat—and the withdrawal of so many from production. The shortage had become, not local, nor merely national, but world-wide. For the first time in history men began to see that even the world's produce was finite, and no one could tell the results of two or three years' more war.

## VII. THE CONQUEST OF GERMAN EAST AFRICA.

ON 1st December the last German troops were driven out of German East Africa, and though the remnant held out until the armistice in Portuguese East Africa, under the skilful and indomitable Lettow-Vorbeck, the last of Germany's colonies had been cleared. German East Africa was the largest of the enemy's colonies, and lay between British East Africa on the north, and Portuguese East Africa on the south, and the great lakes and the Belgian Congo on the west. Its area was almost twice that of Germany, and its frontier was half as large again as all the fronts in Europe put together. Some 50,000 square miles were healthy hill country suitable for Europeans, and its vast sweep included mighty peaks like Meru (14,950 feet), and Kilimanjaro (19,321 feet), the highest point in Africa.

Like most of Germany's colonies, East Africa was little developed, and the Central Railway, from Dar-es-Salaam to Lake Tanganyika, was completed only in February 1914, and the territory was administered with characteristic lack of insight.

Until March 1916 the commander of the enemy forces, Colonel von Lettow-Vorbeck, had kept his charge almost inviolate. His force, which at the outbreak of war consisted of 250 Germans and 2,500 natives, may have amounted, during the campaign, to nearly 30,000, of whom 4,000 were Germans. When General Smuts took over the command, he estimated it at 16,000, with 2,000 Europeans, 60 guns, and 80 machine guns.

With this force General von Lettow-Vorbeck, for over eighteen months, conducted a vigorous offensive, and nothing can dim the unique fame he won in the war. The Allies neither appreciated the magnitude of the necessary operations nor had sufficient force at their disposal, though the British settlers at once flocked to the colours and the Muhammadans were anxious to help.

A demonstration was made by the cruisers *Astræa* and *Pegasus* on 8th August before Dar-es-Salaam, the chief port; but a week later the British settlement at Taveta, the chief point of departure for an expedition into German East Africa, was captured. At the same time the Germans established a strong outpost on Mount Longido, which lies north-west of Kilimanjaro, and began a series of raids on the railway from Mombasa to Victoria Nyanza (the Uganda railway), which continued until the end of 1915.

Brigadier-General J. M. Stewart arrived from India with reinforcements, and was almost immediately called upon to meet a determined attack upon Mombasa. The Germans intended to assault simultaneously by land and sea. The *Königsberg*, which had disabled the *Pegasus* from long range in Zanzibar harbour, was to have co-operated from the sea, but was compelled to flee up the Rufiji River by British cruisers.

The German column comprised between 1,000 and 1,500 men, who seized Vanga on the coast and reached Majareni, where an entrenched camp had been constructed in a mangrove swamp. The place was held by Lieutenant Wavell, with 130 Arabs raised locally; and though severely wounded he was able to beat off the attack. On 8th October an attack upon Gazi, north of Majareni, was beaten off with loss, when all the British officers were wounded, by a native, Colour-Sergeant Sumarie, and the enemy were forced back to the frontier.

At Longido also several vigorous engagements were fought during September, and it was decided to put an end to these frontier raids by clearing the whole region from Kilimanjaro to the coast as far as Tanga. Major-General Aitken, with 6,000 troops from India, arrived off Tanga on 2nd November; but the force landed was too small, and after a spirited encounter the troops had to retire and await reinforcements. The attack was renewed at 11 A.M. on the 4th, but canes had been laid in the bush which, when trodden upon, moved flags, signalling the range, or drew the lids from hives of wild bees. The men came under a heavy and accurate fire, and many suffered terribly from these little pests. But the troops pushed their way into the town, and with better direction might have captured it; but the fire from the houses was very heavy, and the troops were withdrawn, re-embarked, and proceeded to Mombasa. The battle did not disturb the run of German successes, and the assailants suffered 795 casualties, including 141 British officers and men.

The main attack on Longido was delivered at daybreak on 4th November, and lasted till 7.30 P.M., when the troops had to retire from lack of water. But the post was later found to be evacuated, and was for some time held by the British.

By the end of the year a column from Vanga had cleared British territory of the enemy, but an attack upon Taveta in November was as unsuccessful as those on Tanga and Longido. On 2nd January Jassin, a port two miles south of the frontier, was seized; but the garrison, under Colonel Ragbir Singh, after repelling an enemy attack ten days later, was unable to withstand a heavier assault on the 18th, though the garrison held out until their ammunition was finished and their commander dead.



The German commander very skilfully contrived to keep the other frontiers busy. Karungu, a British port on the Victoria Nyanza, was occupied early in September 1914, and this sector was not cleared until the following January, when a British column marched across the border and captured Shirati. Two months



### General Scheme of the Operations in German East Africa.

In Uganda the natives defended their frontier by seizing the line of the Kagera River south of the frontier. A violent attack was made on them in November 1914, and repeated raids were made across their borders. General Tighe relieved the pressure by destroying the German base, Bukoba. It was captured by a converging attack. One column marched on Kagera, and another, under General Stewart, crossed the lake in transports. In Stewart's force were Colonel Driscoll's detachment of Frontiersmen, including the famous Captain Selous. At dawn on 22nd June Stewart's column landed south of Bukoba. Almost at its beginning the

engagement was interrupted by a tropical downpour of rain ; but when the British resumed the attack they speedily crushed all resistance, and the Lancashires, entering the town from the west, drove the enemy off in disorder. When the troops re-embarked the following day they bore with them a considerable amount of ammunition and stores.

The German vessels *Hedwig von Wissmann* and *Kingani* (with the *Kigoma* later) dominated Lake Tanganyika almost to the end of the year. The Belgian port, Lukuga (now Albertville), and other Belgian settlements were bombarded, and the vessels had a gay life until the arrival of two British armed motor launches. These small boats speedily captured the *Kingani* and sank the *Hedwig von Wissmann*.

On the south-west frontier of the colony lie Rhodesia and the narrow strip of the Nyasaland Protectorate. The *Guendolen*, a small steel gunboat, five days after the outbreak of war, partly disabled the only German steamer on the lake, the *Hermann von Wissmann*, and freed the lake from enemy interference. Captain C. W. Barton, with a small force, marched from Karonga a month later in order to repel a German raid. By a strange coincidence the main forces passed each other in the night, and when a detachment of the enemy was being attacked early next morning (9th September), gunfire was heard from Karonga. Only ten Europeans and fifty natives with three women had been left in the settlement. Captain Griffiths was sent back with a double company of King's African Rifles, and completely surprised the enemy at 11 A.M., putting them to flight and capturing two Maxim guns. The main body, following later, met the main body of the enemy, re-formed, and after a vigorous engagement put them to flight ; and Nyasaland was unmolested for the rest of the war.

Rhodesia also suffered from periodic raids. Kiluta, at the Rhodesian end of Tanganyika, was sacked in September, and a few months later Major J. J. O'Sullivan marched across Africa from the Caprivi territory with the 2nd Mobile Column of Native Rhodesian Police. In spite of tropical rains, flooded rivers, and extensive swamps, in twenty days they had crossed the 430 miles. At the end of the rainy season the little force, strengthened by some Belgians, made some successful raids which determined the Germans to initiate a punitive expedition. A column of 2,000 men, with 12-pounder guns and ten machine guns, marched upon Saisi on 24th July (1915). The garrison was outnumbered almost five to one, but the little fort held out until the Germans' food gave out, when the attack was abandoned. No other significant movement had taken place when, towards the end of the year, Brigadier-General Northey arrived to take command of the Rhodesian column.

General Tighe, who had arrived in April to take command of the main force, made elaborate preparations towards the end of the year for a resolute invasion of the German colony ; but many months were spent in inactivity, and General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien was sent out to assume command in December. On his way to Mombasa he was taken ill, and resigned. General Smuts had already refused the command once, but now, on a further appeal, accepted, and acted with characteristic decision. He was at Mombasa on February 19, 1916, and his advance began a fortnight later. He found the British post Taveta a German entrenched camp, with outposts at Serengeti and Mbuyuni, thirteen and seventeen miles to the east respectively.

General Smuts followed in the main General Tighe's plan to occupy the Kili-manjaro region by a converging advance from Longido and Mbuyuni. Stewart's



1st Division was to march round the south-western slopes of Kilimanjaro to Moschi and Kahe. The Mbuyuni column was to advance upon Kahe via Taveta. By 4th March all arrangements had been made. A pipe line had been laid from Bura, and with the help of storage tanks the watering of the force at Mbuyuni was carried out without a hitch. Stewart's division had occupied Longido in January; Mbuyuni and Serengeti had been occupied a little later by the 2nd Division, under Brigadier-General Malleon.

Stewart began his advance on 5th March, and on the 8th he moved to Geraragua. The column had been compelled to leave the main road as it was found impossible for wheeled traffic, but advancing on the west of it reached Boma-Ja-Ngombe on the 13th, after a slight brush with the enemy three days before. It had thus crossed the thirty-five miles of waterless country between Meru and Kilimanjaro.

Stewart had been given two days' start, and only in the evening of the 7th was Brigadier-General Van Deventer's force set in motion in the Taveta region. Van Deventer was in command of the 1st South African Mounted Brigade (at Mbuyuni) and the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade (at Serengeti), and his rôle was to turn the difficult Taveta position by seizing the high ground about Lake Chala, while the 2nd Division, under General Tighe, advanced towards Salaita Hill. Early in the morning of the 8th Van Deventer's force compelled the enemy to retreat by a converging movement from north-west, east, and south, and on the following day it cut the road to Moschi and brought about the evacuation of Taveta. The swift leap forward disconcerted the enemy, and when the 2nd Division opened the attack, on the 9th, on the strong Salaita position, it was found to be undefended. By the time that the enemy had recovered, on the 10th, and were approaching to re-occupy Taveta, they found the British troops in possession. Van Deventer's force now lay between Mamba and the strongly defended gap between the Latema-Reata hills.

**Latema-Reata.**—The gap had to be forced before the Taveta column could advance, and hence arose the battle of Latema-Reata Nek. Malleon decided to attack the Latema spur which commands the nek from the north, but the 130th Baluchis and the 3rd King's African Rifles came under heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from the slopes of the hill. After a stubborn engagement for five hours, General Tighe took immediate command with reinforcements, and ordered another advance; but the second attempt fared no better than the first, and after heavy loss the attack was abandoned. A third assault during the night with fresh troops almost cleared the position, but had not the impetus to push the attack home. It was decided to retire and wait until the pressure from the mounted troops should make itself felt; but the troops were just beginning to withdraw when it was found that the enemy were in full retreat. So the ridge was taken, the retreating enemy shelled as he threaded his way through the dense tropical forest beyond. The British sustained 270 casualties in this engagement; but the position was of the utmost importance, and the enemy suffered heavily, and left much material behind.

**Kahe.**—Van Deventer occupied Moschi unopposed on the 13th, and he was joined there on the following day by General Stewart's column from Boma-Ja-Ngombe. The advance was resumed on the 18th, and the troops marched from the north towards Kahe. Two days later, Van Deventer left Moschi with mounted troops, and sweeping round to the south crossed the Pangani and took up a position east of Kahe. Kahe station and Kahe hill, which dominated the whole position, were thus stormed on the 21st by surprise attack. The hill was repeatedly counter-

attacked, but was firmly held. But Stewart, marching by the direct road to Kahe, with dense bush separating him from Van Deventer, did not know of the successes of the mounted column. The German position was covered by a fork of the Pangani, and further protected by dense bush, and the troops, despite their heroic attempts, could make no headway. But Van Deventer's pressure now made itself felt, and the Germans fell back. Meanwhile Aruscha, south of Meru, had been occupied, and the conquest of the Kilimanjaro-Meru area, "probably the richest and most desirable district of German East Africa," was complete—the first indisputable success in this area since the outbreak of war.

**The Dash for the Central Railway.**—Smuts now reorganised his forces and prepared to strike into the interior of the colony, and either capture the main German forces in the area (Usambara) between Kahe and the coast, or compel them to evacuate it by threatening to cut them off. The 1st Division (Major-General Hoskins) comprised the British and Indian troops forming the 1st East African Brigade (Brigadier-General Sheppard) and the 2nd East African Brigade (Brigadier-General J. H. Hannington). The 2nd Division (Major-General L. Van Deventer) included the 1st South African Mounted Brigade (Brigadier-General Manie Botha) and the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General C. A. L. Berrange). The 3rd Division (Major-General Coen Brits) comprised the 2nd South African Mounted Brigade (Brigadier-General B. Enslin) and the 2nd South African Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General P. S. Beves).

On 3rd April three regiments of South African Horse from Van Deventer's force at Aruscha surrounded Lolkissale, thirty-five miles to the south, and after an engagement lasting two days the whole of the German detachment, some 420 men with numerous bearers, surrendered.

**Kondoa Irangi.**—It was decided to march at once upon Kondoa Irangi, and the column advanced with patrols flung out east and west, until 17th April, when the enemy was encountered four miles north of the settlement. A fierce battle was fought there, and not until noon of the 19th was the enemy's resistance broken. Kondoa Irangi was occupied, and though the column had suffered little loss and had inflicted many casualties on the Germans, the advance of 200 miles from Moschi in four weeks had produced great exhaustion among the men and horses. Many of the horses had died on the way, and Smuts had therefore to rest at Kondoa Irangi and content himself with sending patrols southward towards the Central Railway, and eastward towards Handeni. Van Deventer's column was isolated by the violence of the torrential rains which filled the valleys between Kondoa and Moschi. With their communications cut, the troops had to subsist on local supplies, with occasional stores brought from Lolkissale, 120 miles distant, and many fell a prey to malaria. Lettow-Vorbeck, quick to seize his chance, transferred a force from Usambara, and on 7th May he advanced from the Central Railway, some 4,000 strong. Van Deventer had barely 3,000 rifles, and he withdrew his outposts, until on the 9th he occupied a defensive line round the village. Battle was joined about 7.30 P.M., and four desperate assaults were made. But the line was resolutely held, and at 3.15 A.M. the enemy withdrew, leaving sixty-one dead on the ground. The British losses were two officers and four other ranks killed, and eighteen wounded. With this defeat the last hope of a successful offensive vanished.

**Usambara.**—Lettow-Vorbeck continued to occupy positions near Kondoa until near the end of June, and Smuts determined to take advantage of this diversion



to clear the Usambara district. His plan was to circumscribe still more the chances of retreat by moving eastwards until he reached a point opposite Handeni, and then to swing southwards towards the Central Railway. The enemy expected the British to advance along the railway, and had entrenched positions in the line of advance. The main column (Sheppard's and Beves' brigades), however, moved along the Pangani below a weaker force (Hannington's brigade), while a third column (Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald's battalion, 3rd King's African Rifles) marched through a gap in the Pares towards the Zame Pass. The Pangani advance turned the railway positions, and, as a result, the advance met with little resistance. On 26th May Fitzgerald joined Hannington's force near Zame station, and on 31st May Hannington had successfully crossed the Zame Pass, turning the intervening positions on the railway and reaching the road bridge at Mkomazi. The troops were able to cover 130 miles of trackless country in ten days; and when General Smuts saw that Lettow-Vorbeck was retiring to Handeni, he decided to leave Hannington to clear the Usambara while his main column crossed the Pangani and marched to the south. While the river bridge was being repaired, Smuts visited Van Deventer at Kondoa; and on 7th June Sheppard crossed the Pangani and marched swiftly towards Handeni, which he occupied on the 19th. A day later he was joined by Hannington, who had entered Wilhelmstal on the 12th, and cleared the railway to Korogwe three days later. The advance was continued to the river Lukigura, which Hoskins crossed by night. After a vigorous engagement the enemy fell back on strong positions in the Ngura hills; and as the troops in a month had marched over 200 miles on half rations and little water, Smuts decided to rest and refit before dealing with the tangled knot in front of him.

Meanwhile Smuts determined to clear Eastern Usambara. Karogwe had been taken on 15th June, and under the pressure of converging columns Tanga was occupied on 7th July. In the further operations in the coastal area the navy acted as a mobile flank column. Pangani was taken by a naval descent, and the enemy was caught at Manga, beaten, and driven to Mandera on the Wami River. The navy crowned its achievement on 15th August by brilliantly capturing Bagamoyo at the mouth of the Ruwa River, where the troops concentrated.

**The Belgian Operations.**—Meanwhile General Tombeur, commanding the Belgian forces, had cleared the enemy out of the north-western corner of the colony. Transport and supply were undertaken by the British, and Tombeur moved his base to Victoria Nyanza. Brigadier-General Sir Charles Crewe acted with the Belgians in the western operations, and plans were made for the capture of Tabora. Colonel Molitor's column marched southward upon Kigale, the capital of the rich province of Ruanda, which was occupied at the end of the first week in May. The German forces to the west and east were thus outflanked, and Tombeur's other columns were able to start from north and south of Lake Kivu. Olsen's column entered Usumbura at the head of Lake Tanganyika. A regiment of Molitor's column had already occupied Nyanza, and the left wing of Olsen's column was free to advance. This regiment compelled the enemy to retreat by a heavy engagement at Kilvitawe, and occupied Gitega. Olsen's right wing, which had been marching upon the town from the west, now turned south towards the lake terminus of the Central Railway.

The Allied operations were well concerted. Crewe cleared the Kagera region as Molitor turned eastward towards the Victoria Nyanza, his line of march cutting

across the line of retreat of troops lying to the north. Mwanza, on the southern shores of the lake, was seized on 14th July and turned into Crewe's advanced base. The area west of the lake had already been cleared by Molitor's and the British column, and thus at this date the area north of a line from the lake to Tanganyika was completely free of the enemy. Skilful co-operation and swift movements combined to achieve this result with the minimum cost.

**Capture of Dodoma.**—Meanwhile Lettow-Vorbeck, appreciating the threat from the Nguru Mountains, weakened the force in front of Van Deventer, who thereupon determined to resume his advance from Kondoa. The rains had abated, and with wide-flung flanking columns he began, at the end of June, to move towards Dodoma, upon the Central Railway. Every water-hole was occupied by the enemy, skilfully entrenched; but Berrange's motor battery proved a cogent argument in favour of retreat, and Dodoma was entered on 29th July. General Manie Botha's column, now commanded by General Nussey, occupied Kikombo station a day later; Saranda, to the west, and Kilimatinde, south of the railway, were occupied by Colonel Fitzpatrick on the last day of the month, and Van Deventer had thus one hundred miles of the railway under his control.

**The Nguru Mountains.**—In five months of vigorous campaigning Smuts had revolutionised the situation. The coastal area had been cleared as far as Bagamoyo. The Central Railway had been cut for over a hundred miles and was no longer of strategic value to the Germans. Tombeur and Crewe were half-way to Tabora in the west, and Northey was at Malangali, in the south-west, preparing to move upon Iringa. The skill and resolution of Lettow-Vorbeck in the face of this imperious pressure from so many points are among the remarkable features of the war. In the tangled mass of the Nguru Mountains, and across the main road towards the west, he had some 3,000 troops skilfully entrenched with heavy and light artillery. From these positions he threatened the communications of any advance towards the railway, and thus imposed upon Smuts the necessity of attack at a disadvantage. The main valley through the hills, the Mdjonga, was strongly held by the enemy, who had also held positions to the north-east. With the hope of cutting off the German force, the 1st Division was directed to carry these positions and advance along the Mdjonga, while the 3rd Division turned into a tributary valley towards the west, which emerged from the mountains at Turiani, below the Mhonda mission.

Enslin's (2nd Division) Mounted Brigade penetrated the mountains in three days, and occupied Mhonda on 8th August. Beves' Brigade, with its wheeled traffic, could not use the track, and had to follow Hannington to Matamondo, in the Mdjonga valley. Through this unforeseen difficulty Enslin found himself on the line of the German retreat without the power to block it. On 10th and 11th August a vigorous engagement took place at Matamondo, and Sheppard was able to advance on the east of Matamondo on the 11th. He pursued the enemy to Kepera, crossed the Wami, and reached the crossing at Dakawa as Enslin arrived nearly opposite on the northern bank. Sheppard there fought a heavy battle, while Enslin vainly endeavoured to cross the wide and deep river. Over 120 casualties were suffered in this action, but when Enslin crossed the river higher up, the enemy again fell back.

The German leader stood wherever a defensible position presented itself. Van Deventer fought almost daily battles through dense bush which lay between him and Mpapua. It was necessary to leave the enemy no chance of standing north



of the railway, and though short of water and on half rations the troops pushed their way, frequently through skilful ambushes, to Kilossa and Kimamba on 22nd August. It requires uncommon resolution and courage to force weary men beyond their normal limits of endurance, but continuous pressure is the chief ingredient of victory against a vigorous enemy. The enemy stood at Uleia. They were driven out on 26th August, and a fortnight later the troops occupied Kidodi on the Ruaha. Though very weary, they had suffered few casualties owing to the enveloping tactics, by means of which frontal attacks on strong positions were avoided.

**The Uluguru Mountains.**—Smuts made another attempt to envelop the enemy at Morogoro. But though every known line of retreat was blocked, when the trap closed on 26th August, it was found the enemy had escaped by an unsuspected path through the hills. The British pursued them into the Uluguru Mountains, fighting their way through the bush-clad eastern slopes. At one place the mountain side had to be blasted away to form a road for the transport. At another place, where the road crosses one of the spurs of the mountains, which ends in a precipitous face, a pass was cut through the spur and down the face by the technical corps—"a notable engineering feat," as General Smuts justly remarks.

The western columns came upon munition dumps and guns—a significant testimony to the hurried nature of the retreat. General Brits reached Kissaki from Mahalaka by the elephant track which Burton and Speke had followed into the interior in 1857. At Kissaki an unsuccessful action was fought on 7th September. Beves on one side of the Mgeta was powerless to assist Enslin, who was attacked on the other by superior forces, and both had to retire. The misfortune was crowned when Nussey also reached Kissaki the following morning, and fought a stubborn action against superior forces until ordered to retire by Brits, who could not reinforce his subordinate because of the bush. At the end of the second week of September Dutumi fell to Hannington's assault after a prolonged battle, and Kissaki was evacuated. The enemy left behind his hospital full of sick, but the stores had all been removed. The enemy retired across the Mgeta River, and astride the road from Kissaki to the Rufiji; and the British were forced to rest and refit their troops.

Dar-es-Salaam fell on 3rd September to a converging attack from the land and the sea; and by the third week in September all the important coastal stations as far as the Portuguese border were occupied, and the Germans were finally cut off from the sea.

**The Capture of Tabora.**—Meanwhile, the Belgian force lying north of the western sector of the Central Railway had carried their operations to a successful conclusion. Tombeur and Crewe arranged to advance simultaneously down the two main roads to Tabora, making for St. Michael and Iwingo respectively. Crewe reached Iwingo on 7th August, but Molitor did not arrive at St. Michael until five days later, and, as General Wahle had taken up an entrenched position to the south, he had to renew his supplies of ammunition and stores before he could proceed. Meanwhile, Olsen's column was moving along the railway from the west, and when Molitor resumed his march on Tabora, Moulaert was also advancing thither south of the railway. The precision and rapidity of these movements may be gathered from the fact that, though over a hundred miles apart, all the columns reached the outer defences of Tabora simultaneously on 7th September. At Mambali to the north, at Usoke to the west, and Sikonge to the south—each place some

thirty-nine miles distant from Tabora—General Wahle held up the Belgian columns for eleven days. Armed with a considerable amount of heavy artillery, he fought a skilful defensive battle until the 18th, when he was compelled to retire. Olsen and Molitor entered Tabora on the following day, and a week later Crewe occupied Igalulu, east of Tabora. The casualties on both sides had been heavy, and the Germans left the dead bodies of 50 Europeans and 300 black soldiers on the field. The Germans retired in good order, though 100 European officers and non-commissioned officers and numerous native soldiers were taken prisoner, with much material, and 189 interned Europeans were liberated. By this very useful victory Belgium completed the clearing of a territory more than six times her own area.

Wahle retired eastward along the railway and then south to the Itumba Mountains, while Wintgens fell back with another column through Sikonge. Northey was striking up from the south, and in order to avoid being cut off the troops marched rapidly, and towards the end of October were near the Ruaha River north and west respectively of Iringa.

Smuts had ordered Northey to wait until it was certain in which direction the Germans would retreat, but the south-western column was entering Lupembe when Molitor was reaching St. Michael. The detachment at Lupembe had to contain the German force below the Ruhudje, while Northey's main force, joining hands with Van Deventer at Iringa, met the Tabora force. On 19th October Wahle's column was defeated below Iringa, while the Mahenge detachment was thrown back over the Ruhudje with a loss of 82 prisoners, 200 killed and wounded, and much material. Another German detachment was driven off from Malangali, and after other attempts to break through was driven into Itembule mission, and compelled to surrender on 26th November.

This success resulted in the capture of 7 officers, 47 other Europeans, and 449 native troops, a 10.5 cm. howitzer with ammunition, and 3 machine guns. There were also killed or otherwise accounted for (in addition to those disposed of or removed by the enemy) 71 Germans and 370 native soldiers. The remnants of Wahle's force, having lost the bulk of its artillery and machine guns and over fifty per cent. of its original strength, succeeded in finding a weak spot in the cordon, and effected a junction with the main German body on the Mahenge plateau.

**Hoskins' Campaign.**—When General Smuts handed over the command to General Hoskins on January 16, 1916, in order to represent South Africa in the Imperial Conference, the Germans were penned in an area bounded by a line stretching from Kilwa on the coast northwards to the delta of the Rufiji River, and thence south-west to Mahenge, and almost due south to Songea. Hoskins took over command when the lesser rainy season had imposed a truce on operations, and every effort was being made to replace the white troops with native troops trained in the colony for the final winding-up of the campaign. The Belgian troops had returned to the Congo, leaving small garrisons in the territory they had occupied. The organisation of the forces was a matter of difficulty, and the Germans were still reasonably well provided with the material for carrying on the war. They had not been driven from the Rufiji delta, and the blockade was not watertight.

Hoskins had effected little when, at the end of May 1917, he was succeeded by General Van Deventer, who had fought so brilliantly both in this colony and in German South-West Africa. His was just the forceful personality to press the



campaign to a conclusion, but to realise his problem we must remember that he had to clear a territory more than half the size of France. Lettow-Vorbeck, seeing the weakness of the western sector of the cordon, boldly resolved to create a diversion by sending a column towards the Central Railway. The column had already been at liberty in the wild spaces of the colony some time before they were checked by the Belgians. With the troops readiest to hand, Major Bataille marched south from Tabora, and captured the commander, Major Wintgens, on 22nd May, and the remnant which escaped this little engagement was pursued relentlessly until it fell into the hands of the British in October.

**Mahenge.**—Meanwhile, a force of Belgians had been recalled to assist in the final operations. They marched south under Colonel Huighe from the Central Railway, and at the end of August two columns were in contact at Fakaras. The advance was continued until a German force of 2,000, under Colonel Tafel, was encountered in an entrenched position west of Mahenge. While a heavy battle was being fought, the Belgians threw out flanking columns to the east and south. But they were not sufficiently strong to prevent Tafel retiring with the bulk of his force to the east, and when the Belgians entered Mahenge on 9th October they captured only 109 Europeans, 156 *askaris*, and some war material.

**The Last Phase.**—Van Deventer had compelled the main German force to evacuate the Rufiji area, and in a heavy engagement, on 19th July, below Kilwa, forced them to retire once more. Two months later, the Germans were driven into the Lukuledi valley by another successful action on 28th September. The detachment at the mouth of the river marched upon Nyangao, while a column from Kilwa advanced upon the Lukuledi mission, farther west. Both stations were seized on 19th October, and Lettow-Vorbeck's force, weakened by the loss of 53 Europeans and 268 *askaris* killed, and 241 Europeans and 677 *askaris* captured, fell back to the south-west near the Portuguese frontier. On 29th October, Northey's southern column entered Liwale, thereby dividing Tafel's force from Mahenge from Lettow-Vorbeck's to the south-east. Commandant Henrion, with another Belgian column, marched from Kilwa on Liwale, in order to complete the separation between the two parts of the German force. Tafel, hunted from all directions, made desperate attempts to join his Commander-in-Chief. On 15th November he encountered the weak detachment of Colonel Shorthose, which had marched through Portuguese East Africa to head him off at Liwale, and was able to break through to the south.

Meanwhile, Van Deventer had been clearing the Lukuledi valley. The Germans were forced out of the hills in the first week of November, and in vigorous battles on the 15th and 18th their resistance was broken, 376 Germans and 1,100 *askaris* being taken prisoner. Three days later the troops entered Nevala, taking 178 German prisoners, and Lettow-Vorbeck fled across the Portuguese frontier. On 27th November, Tafel, hurrying southward to join his chief, reached Nevala, and was compelled to surrender with 100 Germans, 1,212 *askaris*, and 2,200 native bearers. By the end of the month it was made certain that the colony was cleared of the enemy.

When we have made every allowance for the advantages which he enjoyed in an area so vast, and with such various possibilities of defence, we cannot refuse Lettow-Vorbeck the praise due to a most remarkable achievement. For three years and four months he had engaged the attentions of considerable Allied forces,

commanded for two years by generals who are justly famous in colonial warfare. No doubt the decision to withdraw the white troops, necessary as it was on account of the heavy sick roll, gave Lettow-Vorbeck an unexpected respite at the end of 1916, when he was being inexorably pressed by General Smuts. But it is to be reckoned to his account that he failed to profit by no opportunity, and he was still holding out defiantly when the armistice was signed. But his fame would not be so great were it not that he was able to hold out so long against two generals of the first rank, one of them of world-wide reputation, and some of the best soldiers in the world.

### VIII. APPROACHES TO PEACE.

ANY student of human affairs, following the course of the war closely, could predict with reasonable certainty the way in which peace would be secured. Already, as we have seen, there had been peace feelers put out by the Central Empires, who very clearly wished to be well out of the struggle. But as the year 1917 dragged on, the general desire for peace grew stronger. Russia, as we have seen, was so disorganised that a continuance of the war seemed impossible; and when the certainty of another winter of war had been thoroughly assimilated, the feeling for peace received an additional stimulus. It must not be thought that this was true only of the "pacifists." Many people felt that the enemy was as much in need of peace as the Allies, and that, in such circumstances, it should not be difficult to make peace. The resolution adopted by the Reichstag was accepted at its face value, and in the autumn there were rumours that unofficial peace offers had been made by the enemy. One such offer, made through M. Briand and brushed aside by M. Ribot, the Premier at the time, certainly seemed to offer the basis for negotiations so far as the Western front was concerned, and its summary rejection without consideration caused a change in the French Government. A student of affairs could predict that there would be these tentative approaches and retirements, and nearer approaches and retirements, before the end came. It could hardly be expected that any statesman would be able at once to bridge the deep gulf of suspicion and fear the war had created, and the latter half of 1917 saw the beginning of these approaches to peace.

One of the most conspicuous of these was made by Lord Lansdowne. It was made in the form of a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, and appeared therein on 29th November. The circumstances under which it was written cannot yet be stated; but the situation when it was published was clear enough. The Bolsheviks, who had seized the reins of power in Russia, held office, irregularly and on sufferance, solely because they claimed that they could give the people peace, and it was known by this time that they undoubtedly meant to try to come to terms with Germany and her allies. It is true they had stated their wish to promote a *general* peace; but most people had lost their illusions about Germany by this time, and did not think that the Prussian military caste would lose the opportunity of imposing a conqueror's terms upon Russia when they saw how deep was her longing for and need of peace. They did not wholly trust the Bolsheviks, but they trusted the Germans much less. Already when Lord Lansdowne's letter appeared, a deputation, consisting of a hussar lieutenant, a military doctor, and a volunteer, had been sent by Krylenko, the Bolshevik Commander-in-Chief, to ask the German Com-



mander-in-Chief to agree to an armistice, and it may have seemed a part of true statesmanship to forestall separate negotiations by preparing the ground for a general peace.

The announcement that the deputation had returned with the consent of the German Commander-in-Chief to open negotiations for an armistice on all fronts was made public on Wednesday, 28th November, and on the following day Lord Lansdowne's letter appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, though it did not become known until the following day that the letter had been refused by the *Times*. It was currently held that the *Times* had committed a blunder in refusing the letter, and this is hardly to be doubted, since the plea that it refused on high motives had simply resulted in the letter getting a wide sympathetic hearing, whereas the *Times* could have made whatever comment it had wished, and thus hampered the appeal from the start. Yet it is difficult now to appreciate correctly the reason of the sensation caused by the letter. Lord Lansdowne, of course, occupied a high position: he was leader of the Unionist party in the House of Lords from 1903-16, Secretary for War from 1895-1900, and Foreign Secretary from 1900-5, and it was the suspicion that he was representing Great Britain as showing the white feather that caused the outcry by those who read the letter hastily, or contented themselves with the mere idea that it was asking for peace without reading it at all. Yet its tone was merely balanced and prudent, and its terms, with one exception, almost irreproachable.

After emphasising the terrible nature of a struggle which had continued for three years and showed no sign of ending, he proceeded to ask what we were fighting for. He answered this question in Mr. Asquith's words, "Reparation and security;" but proceeded to develop the point that of the two *security* was by far the more important. He next compared the statement of Mr. Wilson in favour of a League of Nations with the statements of the German Chancellor and the Pope to show the unanimity of both sides as to the necessity of ensuring the world against another war. The proceedings of the Paris conference he regarded as part of the militant and punitive armoury of a League of Nations, but not a normal part of the Allied policy in peace time. In dealing with the question of territorial changes, he said "some of our original desiderata have probably become unattainable." Then he went on to speak of the gravity of a continuation of the war which would "spell ruin for the civilised world, and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering which already weighed upon it. Security will be invaluable to a world which has the vitality to profit by it, but what will be the value of the blessings of peace to nations so exhausted that they can scarcely stretch out a hand with which to grasp them. In my belief, if the war is to be brought to a close in time to avert a world-wide catastrophe, it will be brought to a close because on both sides the peoples of the countries involved realise that it has lasted too long."

He proceeded to suggest that the peace party in Germany would be immensely stimulated if it were known that (1) "we do not desire the annihilation of Germany as a Great Power; (2) we do not seek to impose upon her people any form of government other than that of their own choice; (3) that, except as a legitimate war measure, we have no desire to deny to Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world; (4) that we are prepared, when the war is over, to examine, in concert with other Powers, the group of international problems, some of them of recent origin, which are connected with the question of the 'free-

dom of the seas'; (5) that we are prepared to enter into an international pact under which ample opportunities would be afforded for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means." The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, he said, were dealt with by Mr. Balfour recently, the 4th by Mr. Wilson, and the 5th was common ground between the Allies and accepted by neutrals. "If it once be established," he concluded, "that there are no insurmountable difficulties in the way of agreement upon these points, the political horizon might perhaps be scanned with better hope by those who pray, but can at this moment hardly venture to expect, that the new year may bring us a lasting and honourable peace."

A careful study of this document will fail to reveal any of those peculiar signs of malignity which called forth such hostility in the British press. It was even thought necessary to make an "authoritative" pronouncement as to the attitude of the Government with regard to it. "Lord Lansdowne," so it ran, "in his letter spoke only for himself. Before writing it he did not consult nor indeed has he been in communication with any member of the Government, his Majesty's Ministers reading it with as much surprise as did everybody else. . . . This war policy [of the Government] has been spoken of in different words, but perhaps is best summed up in the recent utterance of M. Clemenceau: the war aims for which we are fighting are victory." The day on which this pronouncement appeared, M. Trotzky, the Bolshevik Foreign Minister, informed the Allied representatives in Petrograd that negotiations for a democratic peace were to be opened two days later, and asked if they desired to participate.

On 4th December President Wilson addressed Congress, and at once people tried to connect the occasion and compare the terms with those of Lord Lansdowne. On the same day occurred another event, which had greater bearing on the peace movement. Krylenko, the "Highest Commander-in-Chief" of the Russian army, announced that he had taken over the General Headquarters. He was a subaltern whom the Bolsheviks appointed to the army in order to have their designs fulfilled. Numerous changes had been made in the army commands, but none of the men competent to act as general officers could be found ready to obey the commands of the Bolsheviks. The latest Commander-in-Chief, Dukhonin, was as obdurate as the preceding commanders, and he refused to give up his command to Krylenko. On 4th December Krylenko arrived at Russian Headquarters with a body of Bolshevik troops. Headquarters were surrounded, and the command passed into Krylenko's hands. Dukhonin was flung from a train and lynched, and his skull was smashed in by the mob on the platform. General Korniloff had fled from headquarters the day before, or he would probably have shared a similar fate. In announcing his capture of headquarters, Krylenko ended with the adjuration, "I call on you for revolutionary unity and for revolutionary discipline. Long live the authority of the Council of Workmen's, Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies." The revolutionary freedom and discipline were to have many other strange commentaries.

On 5th December a German official report stated that Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria had agreed to a suspension of the hostilities for ten days for the whole of the fronts from 7th December at twelve noon. This report was hardly correct, as the Rumanians were still holding out against the armistice, and there was fighting proceeding in Russia between the Cossacks and the Bolsheviks. The armistice at this stage was merely a breathing space to allow the opposing sides to make a more formal and binding arrangement. The meet-



ing by which it was arranged was purely military, under the control of Hindenburg and Hötendorff; and General Hoffmann, the Chief of Staff of Prince Leopold of Bavaria, the Commander-in-Chief on the Eastern front, acted as the chief enemy spokesman. The Russians at the first meeting struck the note which remained characteristic of their negotiations. They laid down two conditions: (1) that no troops should be sent from the Russian to other fronts; and (2) that the German detachments should be withdrawn from Moon Sound. The German delegates stated that such conditions were unacceptable. These were certainly bold conditions, and we can understand the Germans stating that they could only be put before a conquered Power. The Russian Government published a full account of the negotiations, and it was probably this which prompted the enemy to take over the proceedings more formally in order that the mailed fist might be at least decently draped.

Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks were making it quite clear that they did not intend to be displaced. If the Constituent Assembly did not give them a majority, they would disperse it, stated M. Trotzky. The courts were being dispersed, and justice was to be dealt out by elected courts. A Rumanian official report stated, on 6th December, that the Rumanian army was included in the armistice, and upon this day M. Trotzky issued a note to the Allies. It stated that the negotiations had been interrupted for a week to allow the Allies to be informed. "The armistice can only be signed under the conditions that the troops will not be sent from one front to another, and that the islands of the Moon Sound must be cleared by the Germans."

"Concerning the aims of the war, the enemy delegates evaded a definite reply." This sentence was sufficiently novel in a diplomatic document, but it was merely typical. The note went on to inform the Allies that they must define their attitude towards the peace negotiations—that is, their willingness or their refusal to take part in the negotiations for an armistice and peace. In the case of a refusal, they must declare clearly and definitely before all mankind the aims for which the peoples of Europe may have to lose their blood during the fourth year of the war. As it had been previously stated that the Russian fighting was at an end, this was impartiality with a vengeance.

Before the week ended there were grave disturbances in Russia. The Bolsheviks were determined to force their form of government upon Russia as a whole. They had no intention of abating the stringency of their programme, which was social and internal before it was international and external. They were Communist, and as such refused all collaboration with parties which could only agree with them by compromise. Thus the Cossacks and Cadets were plainly lumped together as the enemies of the proletariat. Kaledin and Dutoff, the leaders of the Don and Ural Cossacks respectively, were under arms. In a pronouncement issued to the people of Russia, all were alike condemned. "The Rodziankos, Miliukoffs, Gutchkoffs . . . want to regain their power." Let it be remembered that it was these people alone who had made the revolution a success and the government by the Bolsheviks a possibility, and it will be seen how far Russia had travelled. But the Bolsheviks were only tolerated because they were the first administration which had actually brought the Russians within sight of peace.

Meanwhile in Britain the repercussion of these events was seen in the speech of Mr. Asquith at Birmingham on 11th December. In general, this speech agreed with that of Mr. Wilson and Lord Lansdowne's letter. Mr. Lloyd George followed

this four days later in a speech to the Benchers of Gray's Inn. But his speech dealt more with the necessity of winning and the approach to victory.

In Russia, despite civil disturbances and fierce fighting, the armistice proceedings were resumed, and on the 15th an agreement was concluded between the Russian delegates and the delegates of Bulgaria, Germany, Austria, and Turkey. The formal armistice was to begin at 2 P.M. on 17th December and to continue till 17th January, and unless notice of termination were given it would automatically continue. The most interesting clause was that which concerned troop movements. Both sides engaged not to increase their troops nor to regroup the troops. "Until 14th January both sides bind themselves not to transfer troops from the fronts between the Baltic and Black Seas for the purpose of advance, with the exception of such movements as had begun at the moment of the signature of the agreement." It was not a very valuable guarantee, but it showed that the enemy were anxious to conciliate when they agreed to such a limitation of their power. Clause 5 gave Germany permission to resume trade with Russia: "with the object of developing and strengthening friendly relations between the troops, the envoys are to enjoy the right of free communication with members of local armistice committees . . . meetings are to be permitted between sunrise and sunset, not more than twenty-five men to be present at a time. . . . Papers and post cards may be exchanged, and the right of trade and exchange of necessities is recognised." Another significant clause was No. 12, which stated that "immediately after the signing of the agreement peace negotiations are to be begun." It was further arranged that delegates of both sides meeting in Petrograd should deal with the subjects covered by the addition to the treaty. This annex covered the exchange of civil prisoners and of prisoners of war unfit for further service, the sending back to their homes of women and children under fourteen years of age, the amelioration of the lot of prisoners of war, and "the measures for the re-establishment of cultural and economic relations between the contracting parties." This was the most important clause for the enemy, and the removal of such negotiations from Brest to Petrograd signified the desire of the Germanic Allies to meet Russian wishes.

The breach between the Bolshevik Government and the Ukraine widened, and the former issued a forty-eight hours' ultimatum to the Ukraine demanding that no further assistance should be given to Kaledin and the Cossacks. Conferences were being held in Berlin between Count Hertling, the new Chancellor, Kuhlmann, the Foreign Secretary, and Count Czernin, the Austrian Foreign Minister; and the two latter left for Brest well primed with instructions. The Ukraine stopped the transport of bread to Petrograd, and fighting broke out at Odessa. Thus, in a most troubled atmosphere, the peace meetings began. The negotiations were opened at a full and formal meeting on Sunday, 23rd December, at which a delegation from the Ukraine was present. Baron von Kuhlmann became the first President, and certain rules of procedure were adopted. The chief Russian representative then stated the principles of the Russian peace programme, and the enemy representatives stated their readiness to examine its terms. These were set out in six points; and they claimed the right to publish a report of the proceedings. After discussion the Quadruple Alliance announced their general agreement with the Bolshevik terms. These were: (1) No forcible union of territories conquered during the war shall be permitted. The troops occupying such territories shall be withdrawn within the shortest period. (2) The political independence of peoples



that have lost their independence during the war shall be restored. (3) National groups which before the war were not politically independent shall be guaranteed the possibility of deciding by plebiscite the question of their future. This plebiscite must be arranged in such a manner that complete liberty in voting is guaranteed for the entire population of the region in question, including emigrants and refugees. (4) In regard to territory of mixed nationality, a minority shall have by law independence of national culture, and, if practical, autonomous administration. (5) None of the belligerents shall be obliged to pay another any so-called war costs. Contributions already levied are to be refunded. The indemnification of losses suffered by private persons in consequence of the war shall be met out of a special fund to which belligerents shall proportionately contribute. (6) Colonial questions shall be governed by the principles laid down in points 1 to 4.

It was further proposed by the Russian delegates that there should be no covert limitation of the freedom of the weak nations by economic boycott, economic predominance of one country over another by means of force, commercial treaties, or special tariff treaties limiting the freedom of trade with any country. It is necessary to remind oneself that these ambitious terms were actually proposed by Russians who admitted that their country was capable of fighting no longer. In this light, the document surely deserves to rank as one of the most wonderful in the history of diplomacy.

The reply of the Quadruple Alliance was made formally by Count Czernin on Christmas Day. One important proviso was laid down: "It is to be expressly pointed out that *all* the belligerents must within a reasonable period, without exception and without reserve, bind themselves to the strictest adherence to the conditions binding all nations in the same manner, if the principles of the Russian *exposé* are to be fulfilled, for it would not do for the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance negotiating with Russia one-sidedly to tie themselves to these conditions without a guarantee that Russia's Allies will recognise and will fulfil these conditions honestly and without reserve as regards the Quadruple Alliance." With this proviso the Austrian Premier then began to note each of the six Russian points. The Russians were asked to give their reply to the Quadruple Alliance in writing, and it was resolved to enter upon the discussion of the points upon the following morning. The Russian delegation then proposed the suspension of hostilities for ten days beginning with December 23, 1917, to January 4, 1918, "so that the peoples whose Governments have not joined in the *pourparler* may have the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the new principle of peace."

Meanwhile, discussion continued at Brest of points concerning the resumption of normal international intercourse on the assumption of a general peace. The third and last meeting before the adjournment to 4th January was held on 29th December; but little of importance was achieved. The great event of the negotiations was the sudden announcement to the world of the hypocrisy of the Central Empires. Their interpretation of the term providing for the freedom to choose their own government of people in occupied districts was that all the occupied parts of Russia should be considered to have voted themselves out of Russia, and that their final political destiny should be decided while the German army and German civil administration were still in being. No one could seriously have hoped that this would be agreed to; but Baron von Kuhlmann cannot have anticipated the violence with which it was repudiated. M. Kamenoff, one of the delegates, reported

on the *pourparlers* on 2nd January to the Central Committee of the Soviet. M. Trotzky then declared that the Government would never agree to such terms, and that the needs of the front would be satisfied at whatever cost, if it became necessary to defend the Revolution. A resolution was passed which again breaks new ground for candour. After stating that the negotiations were made possible by Germany's general agreement, it proceeded: "Already the representatives of the German Government have refused to admit the free right of the oppressed nations and colonies seized before the beginning of war in 1914 to dispose of their own destiny. Already this restriction, which was immediately reported by the Russian delegation, showed that the dominant parties in Germany, compelled by the pressure of the people to grant concessions in the interests of a democratic peace, nevertheless are trying to distort this idea in the sense of their old annexationist policy." Could diplomatic language be stronger and more unsparing? But that the Bolsheviks had turned their backs wholly upon the old form of diplomacy they showed by their appeal to the enemy peoples: "We say to the peoples of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey, under your pressure your governments have been obliged to accept our motto of no annexations and no indemnities, but recently they have been trying to carry out their old policy of annexations. Remember that the conclusion of an immediate democratic peace will depend above all on you. All the peoples of Europe look to you. Exhausted and bled by a war such as there has never been before, you will not permit the German and Austrian imperialists to make war against revolutionary Russia for the subjection of Poland, Lithuania, Courland, and Livonia." A daily newspaper had been started in German, and in it appeared an article which made the Russian points even more forcible. Under the heading "The Mask is Torn Off" it traversed the actual conditions obtaining in the districts occupied by Germany: "The hunger of women and old men is appeased by bullets. . . . Does the Government find support in the Polish and Lithuanian bourgeoisie? The plain facts show that the German Government opened the Polish University, but had to close it. The German Government wished to recruit soldiers in Poland, but had to abandon the idea. . . . Only in Courland did the German Government find support in the persons of the hated slaveowners, the German barons. These Courland slaughterers. . . . These are the people whose voice the German and Austrian Governments consider as decisive for the free disposition of the fate of the whole population of Poland and Lithuania. . . ."

The aim of this new venture was shown by the peroration of this remarkable article, which certainly astonished Europe. In Britain articles had already appeared from the pen of notorious pacifists expressing approval of the German provisions for the disposal of the occupied territory. They were at once shown to be more extremist and pacifist than the Bolsheviks. "German soldiers and workmen," the article concluded, "the word is with you. If you do not compel your Government to renounce the peace proposals which it had the audacity to announce to the Russian Revolution, your own blood and that of all the proletariats will be shed indefinitely. Up, proletariats! up, soldiers of Germany! and join the revolutionary struggle against the continuation of the war and against the Governments which are betraying the peoples. Let there not be a single shot fired on the Russian front. Do not be the executioners of the Russian workmen's revolution. Let not a regiment allow itself to be transported to the other fronts. If you wish for a



general peace make the Governments listen to reason. Long live the International Workmen's and Peasants' Revolution."

A Crown Council was called at Berlin at which Hindenburg was present. Kuhlmann delivered an address before his departure for Brest. The question of transferring the seat of negotiations from Brest to Stockholm had been raised and had to be settled; and as Russia had practically broken off the negotiations on the point of the freedom of Courland, Lithuania, etc., to decide their own destiny, this question too called for discussion.

Meanwhile, the days passed and the Allies made no formal attempt to join the negotiations. And at the general sitting on 9th January the tone of the enemy delegates was distinctly less conciliatory. Kuhlmann reviewed the negotiations, and stated that the terms agreed to before were null and void since the Allies had not signified their intention of taking part in the proceedings within the period laid down. With this facile gesture Germany became herself again. He then dealt with the request to transfer the negotiations to Stockholm, and expressed the "determined and unalterable decision" of the Germanic Allies that they were "not in a position to continue in any other place the negotiations to a preliminary peace," but they were willing to conduct the formal final negotiations elsewhere. He further recorded his objection to the tone of certain speeches made in Russia and quotations of the Petrograd Telegraph Agency. General Hoffmann also protested against the Russian propaganda by wireless messages and appeals signed by members of the Russian Government, stating that such appeals transgressed the spirit of the armistice; and in his protest he was supported by the military chiefs of the other Allies. M. Trotzky in reply asked that the sitting might be adjourned so that the Russians might consider their reply. Meanwhile the civil war in Russia continued, and Krylenko issued an appeal to the soldiers, owing to peace being "in danger," to declare a Holy War against the "Russian bourgeoisie and that of Germany, France, and Great Britain." The negotiations were resumed, Trotzky waiving the request to transfer them to Stockholm and also definitely consenting to carry them on separately.

But the other Allies now began to make their positions plainer. Mr. Lloyd George delivered to the representatives of Labour (the delegates of the Trade Unions) at the Central Hall, Westminster, on Saturday, 5th January, a speech which deserves record as a serious effort at statesmanship. The terms of the document, though not the phraseology, had been concerted with the representatives of Labour, and in consultation with the leaders of the parties. The chief parts of the speech were as follows: "The first requirements, therefore, always put forward by the British Government and their Allies have been the complete restoration, political, territorial, and economic, of the independence of Belgium, and such reparation as can be made for the devastation of its towns and provinces. Reparation means recognition. Unless international right is recognised by insistence on payment for injury done in defiance of its canons it can never be a reality.

"Next comes the restoration of Servia, Montenegro, and the occupied parts of France, Italy, and Rumania. The complete withdrawal of the alien armies and the reparation for injustice done is a fundamental condition of permanent peace.

"We mean to stand by the French democracy to the death in the demand they make for a reconsideration of the great wrong of 1871, when without any regard to the wishes of the population, two French provinces were torn from the side of

France and incorporated in the German Empire. The democracies of this country mean to stand to the last by the democracies of France and Italy, and of all our Allies. We shall be proud to fight to the end side by side with the new democracy of Russia, so will America, so will France and Italy. But if the present rulers of Russia take action which is independent of their Allies, we have no means of intervening to arrest the catastrophe which is assuredly befalling their country. Russia can only be saved by her own people.

"We believe that an independent Poland, comprising all those genuinely Polish elements who desire to form part of it, is an urgent necessity for the stability of Western Europe. Though the break-up of Austria-Hungary is no part of our war aims, unless genuine self-government on true democratic principles is granted to these Austro-Hungarian nationalities, who have long desired it, it is impossible to hope for the removal of those causes of unrest in that part of Europe which have so long threatened its general peace. On the same grounds we regard as vital the satisfaction of the legitimate claims of the Italians for union with those of their own race and tongue. We also mean to press that justice be done to men of Rumanian blood and speech in their legitimate aspirations.

"While we do not challenge the maintenance of the Turkish Empire in the homelands of the Turkish race, with its capital at Constantinople—the passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea being internationalised and neutralised—Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine are, in our judgment, entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions. It would be impossible to restore to their former sovereignty the territories to which I have already referred. The German colonies are held at the disposal of a Conference whose decision must have primary regard to the wishes and interests of the native inhabitants of such colonies. None of these territories are inhabited by Europeans. The natives live in their various tribal organisations under chiefs and councils who are competent to consult and speak for their tribes and members, and thus to represent their wishes and interests in regard to their disposal. The general principle of national self-determination is, therefore, as applicable in their cases as in those of occupied European territories.

"There must be reparation for injuries done in violation of international law. The Peace Conference must not forget our seamen and the services they have rendered to and the outrages they have suffered for the common cause of freedom.

"The economic conditions at the end of the war will be in the highest degree difficult. There must follow a world shortage of raw materials, which will increase the longer the war lasts, and it is inevitable that those countries which have control of the raw materials will desire to help themselves and their friends first. Apart from this, whatever settlement is made will be suitable only to the circumstances under which it is made, and as those circumstances change, changes in the settlement will be called for. A great attempt must be made to establish by some international organisation an alternative to war as a means of settling international disputes. War is a relic of barbarism; and just as law has succeeded violence as a means of settling disputes between individuals, so we believe that it is destined ultimately to take the place of war in the settlement of controversies between nations. We are fighting for a just and a lasting peace; and we believe that before permanent peace can be hoped for, three conditions must be fulfilled. Firstly, the sanctity of treaties must be re-established; secondly, a territorial settlement must be secured based on



the right of self-determination or the consent of the governed ; and lastly, we must seek, by the creation of some international organisation, to curtail the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war. On these conditions, the British Empire would welcome peace ; to secure these conditions its peoples are prepared to make even greater sacrifices than those they have yet endured."

This speech was so well endorsed that its reception was assured among the Allies. Even Mr. Snowden, who took no very sympathetic view of the war, spoke favourably of it as offering the opportunity for negotiations. The tone of the speech, which cannot be adequately represented by its terms alone, was conspicuously grave and responsible ; and the preamble, in which the Prime Minister clearly stated what the British aims were *not*, was particularly valuable. It was, of course, aimed at the German people, though very little of it penetrated through to them in the way it was meant. The German officially inspired comment—for the Press had strict regulations as to how it was to deal with such pronouncements—specially emphasised the change of tone as showing a chastening of the Allies' mood. At the same time it dwelt with care upon the interpretation of the Premier's terms which the German Government, at any rate, knew was not meant. The speech had been carefully worded, and the term which covered the question of Alsace-Lorraine, for instance, was chosen with particular care, so that the Germans could readily agree to it. For who could refuse to "reconsider" such a vexed point when the state existing before the war had been so disastrous for Germany?

Three days after the delivery of Mr. Lloyd George's speech Mr. Wilson, in a message to Congress, gave the Allied terms as they appeared from the American angle. He pointed out the divergence between the German general principles at Brest and their particular application, attributing the former to the German statesmen who were in touch with the people's movement, and the latter to the military leaders. He further pointed to the unanimity of the Allies, their candour and fearlessness in stating their terms, and contrasted these qualities with those of the enemy Powers. He then proceeded to deal with the state of Russia : "Their power apparently is shattered, and yet their soul is not subservient. They will not yield either in principle or in action. . . . And they have refused to compound their ideals or desert others that they themselves may be safe. . . . Whether their present leaders believe it or not, it is our heartfelt desire and hope that some way may be opened whereby we may be privileged to assist the people of Russia to obtain their utmost hope of liberty and ordered peace . . ." These references filled up a gap in the speech of Mr. Lloyd George, which showed little appreciation of Russia's difficulties, and was no doubt largely responsible for the taunt of M. Trotzky to a British correspondent that the Allies were trying to throw the blame of the loss of the occupied Russian territories upon Russia, that so they might with apparent openness and appearance of victory secure concessions on the West. It was a superficial taunt in any case, since if Germany could secure possession of these Eastern territories she would be in a better position to negotiate a victorious peace in the West. Still the apparent lack of sympathy shown by the Allies to Russia had an ill effect upon the Russian revolutionaries.

Mr. Wilson then set out his programme of the world's peace in the following six points :—

"1. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be

no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

"2. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas outside territorial waters alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

"3. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers, and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

"4. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

"5. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of government, the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the Government whose title is to be determined.

"6. Evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for independent determination of her own political development and national policy."

These various statements and re-statements of terms had little apparent effect. The Russian delegates continued to debate the terms of peace with the Germans, and little by little the discussion developed into a personal struggle between Kuhlmann and Trotzky. When we remember the anarchic state of Russia, the hopelessness of her military position, and the approach to starvation in the capital, we can only marvel at the extraordinary moral courage and intellectual strength of the Russian spokesman who insisted so perseveringly on the translation into action of principles of the most ideal conception. The Constituent Assembly met in this atmosphere, and a lull in military operations set in during January upon all the fronts.

On 3rd March peace was concluded between the Central Powers and Russia at Brest Litovsk after a separate peace had been concluded with the Ukraine. Its effect was to detach from Russia a string of provinces with a population of some fifty millions. She was practically cut off from the Baltic and completely cut off from the Black Sea. But the peace which violated almost everything the Bolsheviks stood for was confirmed. Lenin, the Idealist, preferred to live to fight another day for the proletarian World Revolution. Rumania, later on, was compelled to accept a conqueror's peace. By these actions Germany officially went back on the Reichstag resolution. The summer's mood of compromise had withered under the blight of the possibilities of the Russian collapse, and it was completely swept away by the stern resolve of Ludendorff and his followers. Clemenceau had also ranged himself with the "jusqu'aboutists," and the stage was set for the decisive struggle.



## BOOK VII.

### THE LAST THROW (March 1918--August 1918).

THE winter of 1917 saw the cessation of major operations on the battle fronts, though raiding activity was continued on the Western front with great vigour by the Allies, as well as by the enemy. Many of these raids would have been thought significant engagements in former wars; but in these days of national armies and embattled lines hundreds of miles in length, they become part of the ordinary apparatus by means of which intelligence is gained as to movements behind the lines, and minor readjustments are made in the alignment of the forces. The raids were not strikingly more frequent in one area than another, but were distributed pretty evenly over the fronts. The raids were supplemented by air-raids, and this period saw numerous long-distance daylight raids on German towns.

Behind this enforced truce of winter changes of the highest importance took place. After considerable discussion between the French and British Governments, it had been arranged that the British army should take over the section of the front held until then by the 3rd French Army; but the Cambrai fighting had delayed the change, and it could not be completed until the end of January. This change, which led to the relief of a considerable body of French troops and facilitated the concentration of French reserves, laid a great strain on the British army. Haig had only fifty-eight divisions at his disposal, and during the month of February the Army Council had ordered that divisions be reduced from thirteen to ten battalions. This change meant that considerable modifications had to be made in the handling of brigades and divisions, and the commanders found themselves dealing with unfamiliar units. The extension of the line gave the British another twenty-five miles to defend; and thus, on the eve of a widely-advertised attack, the 5th Army was strung out over an extent of forty-two miles, over half being unfamiliar ground, with but fourteen infantry and three cavalry divisions available, and these of changed value.

The Germans, on the other hand, were known to be much stronger. Already twenty-eight divisions had been brought from the Eastern and six from the Italian fronts. Hindenburg went little beyond the sober truth when he said "we can turn our entire strength to the West;" and it was in this lull of winter that it was decided to make a last throw for victory. At a secret session of the Reichstag, Hindenburg and Ludendorff solemnly assured the people's representatives that they could obtain a clear and decisive victory in the summer, but they estimated the cost at between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000 casualties. Brest-Litovsk had shown a first glimpse of the meaning of victory, and this stifled the scruples of many, while others were persuaded that the military method was the only one. The Allies had refused to compromise in the only sense in which the Germans understood the term, and unless a

swift victory were obtained the Americans would soon be pouring into France, and the interminable vista of the war would be restored. The two generals realised that the decision would turn upon the reserves; and as they had concluded that the Americans could not get to France in sufficient numbers to turn the scale, they were confident of success. In this they showed themselves true Germans, with the characteristic weakness of seeing what they wished to see. At this moment they had about 320,000 excess of rifle strength over the Allies; and somewhere about the end of June the excess had been used up, and the armies were approximately equal. During July the scale turned; but before that day the Allies had passed through their most fiery ordeal.

During March many German voices were heard, heartening their countrymen for the losses which they knew would come. "We are entirely confident . . ." said Ludendorff. "England will drink the cup to the dregs," wrote the *Vossische Zeitung*. "We stand at the decisive moment," said the Kaiser, on 18th March. The Allies realised that the Germans meant to make a final bid for victory, and they took what they thought to be suitable precautions to cope with the attack. But when the moment came it showed up the weakness of their dispositions, and for some months the armies reeled from crisis to crisis. Ludendorff had a splendid machine at his disposal; and while the British were so overburdened with the organisation of their front for attack that the troops could not be relieved or exercised regularly, the Germans were carefully and skilfully training. The Staff had noted that attacks which had begun well tended to go to pieces after the first few hours, and they instructed the army commanders to extend their control and direct the fighting throughout the battle. The shock troops were trained to "infiltrate" defensive systems, sending up rocket signals where any weakness was discovered, in order that reserves should rush thither and break through. The barrage was made looser and more elastic, so that the infantry could exploit successes without the check imposed by their own fire curtain. The artillery was to follow swiftly, and the mine-throwers were to tread on the heels of the shock troops. These men, the cream of the army, were armed with light machine guns and carried a special automatic pistol which held—with a magazine fixed on to the butt—forty-four cartridges, and could be fired as a rifle from the shoulder. Another feature of the attack was the swift concentration by night marches. The men lay under cover by day, and only moved by night. Special precautions were taken to secure secrecy. The men were not told to which army they were going, except that it was to Michael 1 (Below),\* Michael 2 (Marwitz), or Michael 3 (Hutier). They only found the identification of these armies when they arrived on the spot. The day of the attack was called Michael's Day.

Despite these elaborate preparations, or perhaps, to some extent, because of them, Ludendorff failed to give sufficient thought to the development of the defensive, and in five sensational months his bolt was shot. He had delivered five heavy blows in the West and one in Italy. Some reputations came badly out of this ordeal. One general, Gough, earned much ill-merited blame, for the responsibility for the first breakdown was but slightly his. Ludendorff's fame reached its zenith and waned, and Foch, the one truly great general in the war, came to his own.

\* "Michael" is the German term corresponding to "Tommy" (Atkins).



## I. THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE SOMME.

ON March 21, 1918, the German forces in France suddenly launched their long-advertised offensive, and until two days had passed people in England had only rumour to guide their imagination. Then the impression of disaster began to take root, and for six weeks the Allied peoples lived almost with bated breath.

Before the blow fell, the scale of battles seemed to be stereotyped. Each side had tried its hand against the modern defensive; and the Germans had gained even less than the Allies. It is true that there had been a great change in the situation since the end of the British offensive at Ypres, and even since Cambrai. But when the German offensive began no one appreciated the difference the Russian defection made. There had been disquieting reports in the speeches of British Ministers; but hardly had a pessimistic statement gained expression before it was either minimised or contradicted by some other Minister. The people were at the mercy of the Government, not only in Germany, but also in Britain and France. Ministers and military critics spoke glibly about divisions, when the term referred to very different things in Germany and Britain. Mr. Lloyd George once or twice fell back upon gross totals; but no one knew whether these included services which were quite subsidiary to the fighting line, or whether they represented effectives. The General Maurice episode rose from the conviction of one of the men best competent to judge that the Government statements were misleading. Sometimes the impression seemed to be that the Allies on the Western front were in superior force; and at such moments the German offensive was set down as bluff. It had first been advertised in the preceding December, and as the months dragged by with no attack it seemed less possible the Germans would try again where they had failed so often before. The Battle of Verdun began on 26th February; and when this day went by and still no attack came, people felt more and more inclined to discredit the correspondents at General Headquarters who reported the imminence of the offensive.

Yet the Germans *had* to strike. Despite all the hopes from the Ukraine, despite all the hopes from Russia, the food position was worse than ever. Everything seemed to be running out. Even clothes began to be a difficult problem; and the Militarists, who ruled Germany and with it her Allies, saw that their lease of power was drawing to an end. Either they must abdicate, or they must win outright; and this will-o'-the-wisp of victory in the field they set themselves to chase once more. *This* time would make an end. It is true that the same had been said of every other attempt. The submarines were to have ended the war. But the anniversary of the unrestricted campaign passed, and the rationing of England had only just begun. The Militarists reasoned, however, that the peace with Russia had given them more troops than ever before—a greater *force*, in fact, since the guns which had been used in Russia were also available. Furthermore, as the submarine menace was being successfully controlled, the Germans must strike soon, if at all, or the Americans would be in France. The Allies held practically all the world's supplies of the raw materials upon which modern States live. Unless they could be compelled to relax their hold, the Germans were beaten. The Germans must strike or give in.

Their problem was by no means easy. Although the German Intelligence knew

that the Allied defences were not so elaborate as their own, they had proved invincible before. Bloch, writing long before the war, had thought war impossible because of the power of the modern defensive. He gave the odds necessary for a break through as seven to one. He assumed, of course, that the defensive system would be adequately held ; and that, unfortunately, was not the case over a great part of the British line, as the Germans knew. What had to be attempted to " break through " was a sort of magnified *coup de main*. The break through must be immediately successful, or it would fail against the stiffening resistance of reserves. The " wedge offensive " had been killed before the ruins of Verdun. The whole difficulty was well put in the account officially supplied to the German press after the event. " The attempt to break through failed wherever it was attempted. It was of no avail that greater numbers of men and greater quantities of material were used in each battle, or that the point of attack was changed. The battles in Flanders brought no success, although here and there were great masses of men and artillery concentrated in a very narrow space, and although the tactics of 20th September, by limiting the depth and narrowing the breadth of the attacks, increased the force of the blows tremendously. It looked as though it were an unchangeable law with the Western offensives that the attacking wave should ever exhaust itself just before it reached the goal. The defender, who watched for the dead point and struck a counter-blow at the enemy's weak spot, succeeded in throwing back the onslaught, averting a breach before considerable casualties were suffered. The problem of breaking through the West front became in time one the solution of which appeared to depend on laws of time and space which could not be discovered."

We may notice, in passing, that the idea of the " break through " was a little out of date. In the battles of history, where small armies were engaged, the aim was to outflank your opponent and so surround and capture him, or drive him in headlong flight, a disorderly mob. Frontal attacks, to which a " break through " alone applies, were shunned ; but, if adopted, the break through was decisive. The break through in 1918 offered an end only partly military, and only promised the remote possibility of a decision. It would open up flanks, and the attempt would then be made to envelop some section on either side of the gap. Failing this, it must achieve, by the enforced evacuation of territory, a political and moral effect. To break through in the complete sense meant the rupture of the whole defensive zone, which might be from five to seven miles deep, before the defensive upon either side could readjust their line and so impose the necessity of another frontal attack. In the less complete sense, it involved the piercing of the whole defensive zone on a sufficient front, and the impetuous forcing onward of the fluid line until the whole line was in motion. History had marched quickly ; and in such vast battles it was almost impossible to do more than destroy an appreciable part of an opponent's force. Even the Italian offensive had not secured a decision. The inevitable " dead point " came again. Yet, by a succession of such incomplete blows, the Germans might, if they ended up with a sufficient balance of numbers, have at length weakened the Allies' numbers, material, and *moral*, to bring them in sight of an old-time decision, when great masses of the Allies would be surrounded, and at length their armed force would be destroyed, so far as capacity for organised military operations was concerned.

The question, then, was one of how to prevent the exhaustion of the attack, how to defer the " dead point " before considerable casualties were suffered. This,



in actual fact, depended largely upon initial success, and where the opponents were not very unevenly balanced it meant that somehow surprise must be secured. It involved a secret concentration of men and guns, and the problem this presented was very great. With airmen constantly in the air, and prying out the secrets behind the lines, it might have seemed almost insuperable. But with excellent camouflage the vast masses of troops and guns and munitions might lie *for a little while* near the front lines. The problem of camouflage was carefully studied, and experiments were made behind the lines with German airmen ever at work photographing, until the secret of concealing large bodies of men for a few days had been discovered. The railway system and convoy by motor wagons was developed until it was almost perfect. General von Hutier had discovered how to throw a sudden unexpected force on to an unsuspecting opponent at Riga. Night marches were an integral part of the plan. The men rested by day and went forward silently by night, with the billets and resting-places arranged in advance. But when the secret concentration had been made, and the men were all ready, there was still the problem of mobility to discover. It was necessary to throw ever fresh divisions into the fight as the struggle continued. And all the time men had to be fed, guns run forward with ever fresh supplies, and the wounded had to be evacuated—all over roads torn to shreds and littered with all the debris of a retreating army. There had to be a host of pioneers and military policemen to control and repair the roads, examine material and send it back or impound it at once. From the rail-heads there must be an unceasing flow of motor wagons of all sorts.

## II. THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE SOMME: THE FIRST PHASE.

It seems almost incredible that this problem was solved so successfully. When the Germans struck on 21st March between Arras and the Oise, they had accumulated on this fifty miles of front some seventy-three divisions, about a million and a half of men, with appropriate munitions, guns of all sorts, gas shells in vast quantities, bridging material, and so on. In the front line more than half the force was assembled, nearly a division to a mile. These included the specially rested and intensively trained shock troops, picked men whose business it was to break through at all costs. Close behind lay some twenty-one divisions to follow up and carry the line forward, and at length sustain it while the shock troops were withdrawn to rest and be brought up to strength for further blows.

The artillery had been specially taught new tactics. It was their work to run the guns forward immediately the action began, so that they might be ready to support the troops against resistance farther west.

The troops were grouped in three armies. On the northern part of the line, from just above Arras to about Mœuvres, lay the 17th Army ("Michael 1") under General (Otto) von Below, fresh from his victorious battle on the Upper Isonzo. From below Cambrai to the Omignon stream lay the 2nd Army ("Michael 2") of Marwitz; and thence to La Fère lay Hutier's 18th Army ("Michael 3"). The two first were under the direction of the Crown Prince of Bavaria, while Hutier's army belonged to the group of the German Crown Prince, whose command had thus been prolonged westward in order to give him another chance of achieving military glory by proxy. Gallwitz had taken charge of the Verdun sector.

We may gauge the high hopes which inspired this terrific attempt to smash the Allied forces by the grandiose phrasing of the first German *communiqué*. "*Under the command of H.M. the Kaiser and King*," it began, and then proceeded to recount captures and successes. For some days the battle was described in the German press as the "Kaiser's battle"; and this weary, weak, and vain old man was pictured by obsequious correspondents hard at work at St. Quentin directing the mighty machine which even his generals found beyond their powers. The Crown Prince was assisting his Imperial father by marching swiftly towards Amiens; and somewhere in the back of their minds was a picture of an amazing and melodramatic entry into Paris. It was to be a thorough rehabilitation of the dynastic prestige. What matter Lichnowsky's unsparing comment and Muhlön's disclosures. In the Champs Elysées all would be forgotten; and with his heel on the neck of the French, the absurd anachronism would pose like King Arthur.

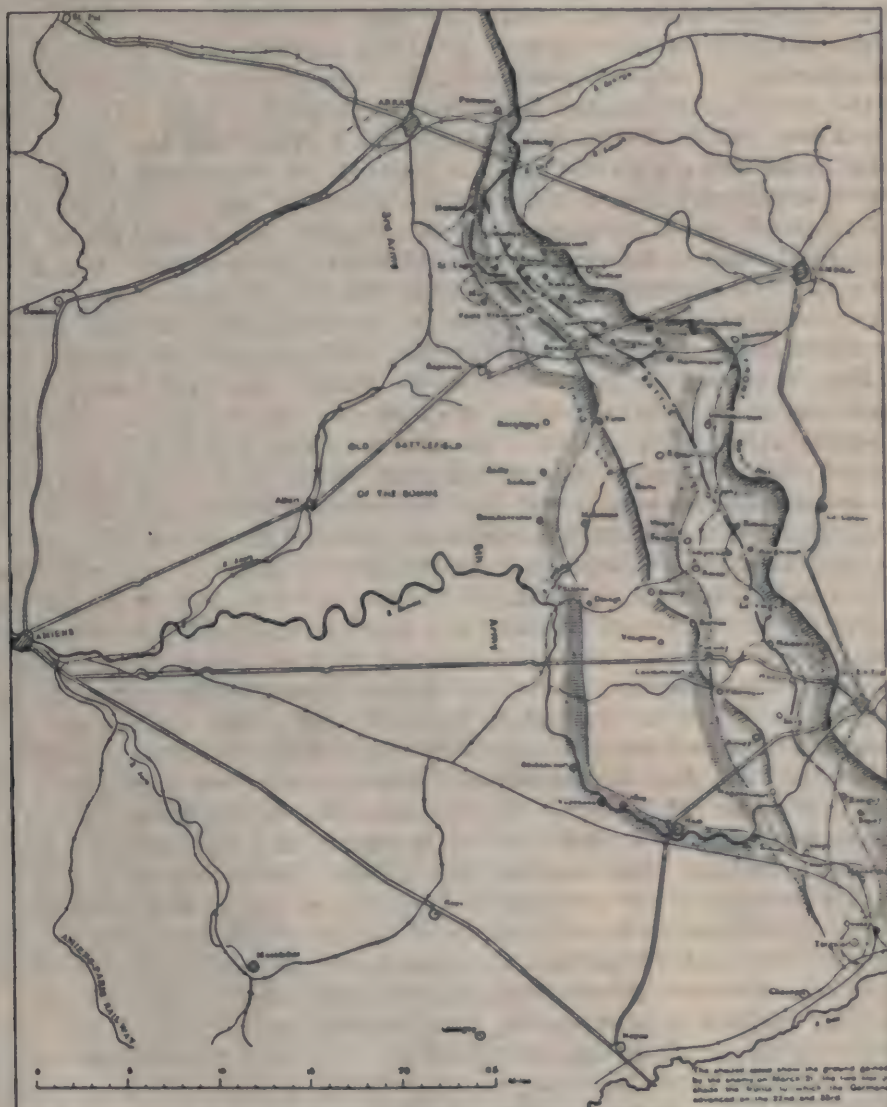
Over against these mighty German armies lay Byng's 3rd British Army and Gough's 5th Army. The latter had not long taken over the new sector of the front from the French. The British had reluctantly agreed, as they felt the strength of the troops inadequate to sustain such an extension; and Gough's small army had been relieved but seldom, and trained out of the trenches not at all. The defensive system had to be improved, and so the men were set to wiring and digging, weary and without that fine polish which frequent and hard training out of the trenches alone can give.

"The wedge offensive," I have said, had failed at Verdun. After four months' trial it had proved a complete and costly failure. The reason is, that with appropriate tactics an opponent, who is numerically inferior, can mass sufficient reserves to meet a purely local thrust. Ludendorff's plan to prevent this local recovery was to strike with all his force on a vast front. If the line could be breached anywhere the chance could be seized, since the Allied reserves could not be brought in except from distances beyond the great area involved. There were chances, too, of local or even strategic envelopment. If the defensive were to be maintained too successfully, above and below the breach, the Germans might drive right through and surround the defenders. But when all these things are grasped they give only the medium of the picture. The actual plan was worthy of the sum of ideas which went to form it. Its detail made up a printed book of one hundred pages which was supplied to all officers. Amazing as it may seem, the blow undoubtedly achieved a considerable measure of surprise. Captured army orders show how much stress was laid upon secrecy. The men were to attend lectures upon the need of secrecy. There was to be no hint in letters, no discussion in trains, no discussion even by officers if a stranger were present. So the men nursed their secret which was to put an end to the war.

The actual plan was, at one blow to smash the British army and wipe it out as a fighting force. The means to this end were an extension of Marwitz's plan in the counter-attack at Cambrai. Instead of a small envelopment, such as Marwitz had attempted by his converging blow through Mœuvres and Gonnellieu, there was to be a huge Sedan somewhere about Bapaume and Péronne. Below was to crush in the northern face of the Cambrai salient, while Marwitz and Hutier broke through above St. Quentin. It was indeed a "concentric attack," as the German command stated. Hutier's task further involved the driving a wedge between the British and French armies about La Fère. Then, with a considerable part of the British army



surrounded and a great gap caused, Hutier's army could wheel south, outflanking the French as Marwitz and Below marched west, and then north-west to throw the remnant of the British troops back upon the coast. It was a plan of the most impudent ambition ; yet its very grandiosity had in it a touch of that genius which,



The Second Battle of the Somme: the First Phase.

in war, frequently wins the day. When the event did not fall out as it had been planned, the German Staff told their people that the plan was merely to "break through," and fell back upon the comparative gain of ground to show it had succeeded.

The British had to meet this deadly blow with weakened divisions and few of

them, wearied men, and on some parts of the front only hastily improvised defences. The Germans had quickly assimilated the lessons of Cambrai, and they had determined to make only a short but extraordinarily intense bombardment. The evening of 20th March the temperature fell, and there were clouds of mist over most of the front. The German meteorologists thought at the last moment the plan might have to be postponed, as further rain threatened. But it was decided to take the risk—a decision of the utmost moment, since it was this very mist which gave them their initial advantage. The last "approach march" came to an end, and in the evening mists the troops made their final dispositions in complete security. The preceding days had been bad for observation, and any Allied airmen who had scented what was afoot could only get back to report at nightfall. It must not be thought that the Allied command was in ignorance of the impending attack. It knew a blow was about to fall, and had a pretty clear notion where; but it could neither gauge the extent and weight of the attack, nor where the full strain would be. And, finally, Haig's very skilful dispositions could not double the size of Gough's army.

On the morning of 21st March, at 3.30 A.M., the darkness was suddenly dispelled by the flames of bursting shell, and the German artillery opened fire over the whole line. Haig had given the order "Prepare for attack" the night before, and the men were resting fully clothed. Shells of all calibres, from the heaviest artillery to the trench-mortars, and gas shells of all sorts, were soon searching out all the infantry and artillery positions of the British front. After three hours of this inferno, all the lower-range guns were turned upon the forward defensive zone, and for three hours an unprecedented artillery concentration raked all the British positions. No pen can tell the story of those hours of grim endurance. Infantry men and artillery men were all held to their gas masks for hours as the soft spray of the gas shells broke over them. Their ears were deafened with the shriek and whistle and boom of shells; and it was with a feeling of relief that the front-line garrisons beheld the grey-green figures of the German infantry as they loomed forward out of the mist. The front lines, under the new tactics, were but weakly held, and the real battle was fought in the second line (or battle zone). By nightfall the Germans had crossed over the second line above St. Quentin and about Ronsoy; and were in the second line over a great part of the front. But we cannot thus lightly dismiss all that this brief summary implies. In that crowded day the armies vied with one another in stubborn endurance. Bapaume and Péronne were to be reached on the first day; and if they were not, it was only because Byng's troops fought with unconquerable tenacity. The Germans achieved least below Cambrai; and above that place the attack was made to suffer huge losses for its penetration into the battle zone. Below deployed some seventeen divisions on a front of about twenty thousand yards. In the first day the bulk of his supporting troops were involved, and the British found themselves fighting at places at odds of three or four to one. The German tactics of rushing forward with their machine guns, and of dragging even their heavy artillery into the battle zone, were hard to meet; and the difficulty was exaggerated by the mist, which allowed the assailants to approach in safety until they were upon the defenders. But the British troops, though hardly tried, stood firm and gave more than they took. From Croisilles to Ecoust and Noreuil they fell back under sheer weight of the numbers which constantly appeared to be swelled; but the 3rd and 40th Divisions maintained an unbroken front. Just below, the struggle showed more vicissitudes. Vaulx-Vraucourt was seized and retaken. At Doignies the



Germans cut down to the Cambrai railway ; but a counter-attack with tanks ejected them, and the 51st Highland and 17th Divisions added further laurels to their name. The Germans, after a fierce fight about Vendhuile, cut their way north and south to Epehy, and seized Ronssoy and Le Verguier. It was in this sector that the British troops saw the men dimly out of the mist approach to cut the unbroken wire, and such was their discipline that the German officers insisted on dressing the men before getting to work. It was a costly experiment, and the machine gunners, recovering from their surprise, shot down the foolhardy assailants.

It is impossible to recount the many heroic little struggles that made up this stern defence. But at Gauche Wood we may picture the South Africans of the 9th Division, on the extreme left of the 5th Army. Wave after wave of shock troops broke against the little island made by that wood. Throughout the day the Germans returned to the attack, only to be thrown back ; and at nightfall the small garrison, though nearly surrounded, was still in possession. Again, in the quarries of Templeux, at the west of the battle zone, the heroic Lancashires exacted a respect from the Germans which they openly acknowledged. Their machine guns decimated wave after wave of the shock troops ; until, in the end, they were withdrawn to keep the alignment. Le Verguier also came in for honourable mention. It was there that a body of the Queen's West Surrey Regiment held out for hours against such numbers as no troops should ever have to face. Dearly had they made the victors pay before the overwhelming waves engulfed them. It is difficult to know whether this heroic defence thrills us more than those incessant attacks of the Germans against the unbroken defence of a handful of men. As far as the Omignon stream this and similar engagements had exacted a terrible price for the gains they yielded ; and if the battle had all gone like this sector, the German hosts, determined as they were to force a decision, must have recoiled from the terrible spirit they had evoked.

But farther south the line was more thinly held ; and the troops, less used to their positions, less trained and more weary, were at places overwhelmed. Hutier's thrust of more deeply echeloned divisions would not be denied. North of St. Quentin the 9th Corps of General von Luttwitz stormed Holnon Wood. The assaulting waves burst through north of the wood ; and if a wood is more difficult to storm, it is also an obstacle to that perfect formation which alone gives success to even heroic defence. The troops assisted those of General von Oettinger (9th Corps) and General von Webern (17th Corps) to seize the villages of Savy, Fontaine, Urvillers, and Essigny. Below were General von Conta's 4th Corps and six divisions of General von Boehn's 7th Army, and these succeeded in crossing the Oise and pushing onward towards the Crozat Canal. The stubborn defence in front of St. Quentin led to the men being cut off, and the irresistible wave of the advance left behind small groups of men, like stones in the waters, still holding out against the swirling flood. So at the end of the first day the defence, though intact to the Holnon Wood, was below that spot disorganised, badly shaken, and a thing of individual groups rather than that compact, well-knit whole which can alone stand against the shock of overwhelming numbers. The line here was more lightly held. Between Alaincourt and Amigny lay some ten miles covered by the line of the Oise, normally marshy and a good defence in itself, but at the moment dry and of little value. When it is remembered that over the whole of Gough's line the average length held by a division was about four miles, we can appreciate the tenuity of the defence on this southern sector.

The opening day had been terrible and decisive; how decisive was not then appreciated by the Allied Command. The communications had been cut by the preliminary bombardment, and the directing minds in the back areas had only the occasional reports of messengers to tell them how their men were faring. At times the gunners would suddenly find Germans on their flanks and in the rear. They had no mark for their fire, for even in the afternoon the mist lay thickly in patches and blotted out all save the immediate foreground. In the forward positions, too, the machine gunners frequently knew first of the advance by finding themselves under fire from the rear; but in many parts of the line, even until late in the evening, they were still holding out, though surrounded, and inflicting heavy loss upon the enemy. It was not even certain at night that the main attack was being delivered against the 3rd and 5th Armies. Between Reims and the Argonne, north of Verdun and on the right of the Meuse, there was a heavy bombardment; and in the two former places strong infantry attacks were delivered. These were particularly persistent and violent south of Tahure. Only small and temporary gains were achieved; but, as diversions, the attacks succeeded in confusing the command and masking to some extent the direction of the main thrust.

In the earlier hours of the night the orders on the British front showed some confusion. In some parts of the line gas shells and ammunition were brought up for a further stand on the next day. Later on these orders were changed, and in the early hours of the 22nd the infantry were ordered to withdraw. Many units had to abandon their stores and ammunition which had but recently been brought up. Already the artillery were moving westward. But the air was full of rumours, and no one knew how to interpret the events of the day.

The battle continued without cessation. Behind the German lines, though parts of the machine were overstrained by the congestion due to the great calls made upon the munitions and the vast numbers of wounded, the average or balance was on the whole sufficient to present the effect of an irresistible force. Yet the struggle was still hotly contested, and the fate of the line trembled in the balance. Byng's army, with cool and skilful leading, reacted so strongly that, as the German account puts it, "Von Below's army had to engage in a defensive battle while in the middle of an attack." That is a significant admission, and those who remember the meaning of this type of battle from the experience of the First Battle of the Somme, can form their own conclusion as to the sort of loss such operations involved for the Germans. On Friday, the second day of the attack, the Germans pushed a dent in the northern face of the Cambrai salient as far as St. Leger, Vaulx-Vraucourt, and Morchies. But, just below, the British troops were only then driven to evacuate Flesquières and Ribecourt. Trace the line here on a map, and one can see how far Below's terrific assault had been able to penetrate, and how marvellously the British troops had borne up under the shock. Only as night fell were the Germans through the second line, and this largely because the events on the southern part of the sector under attack had made it necessary to readjust the line to some extent. The far eastern part of the Cambrai salient was voluntarily evacuated. Below's dent above made the retention of these positions a too expensive luxury in view of the movements far to the south; but until this moment almost as far as Gouzeaucourt the original line was intact. Strangely resting on such perfect actions as that of Gauche Wood the line had been held in face of all odds.

Below Gouzeaucourt Marwitz's left and Hutier's right had developed their



original success, and on the night of Friday the Germans were through the third line on a wide front. Marwitz's troops had taken Lieramont, Bernes, and Caulaincourt (on the Omignon stream); and his left centre was half-way to Péronne. Below the Omignon stream Hutier's army, keeping pace on its right with Marwitz, took Beauvois, Fluquières, and crossed the Crozat Canal at Jussy, Quessy, and Tergnier. Gough had withdrawn to the line of the canal the night before, and the attack began early in the morning. The British could not have the support of their artillery, as they lay too near the canal; and the Germans brought up numerous trench mortars and machine guns to cover the crossing by rafts. But it was not until the afternoon, after suffering heavy loss, that the weight of the German attack bore down the defenders and a crossing was forced at Quessy. The Germans at once attempted to advance upon Vouel, but the 58th Division clung to Tergnier, and, lying on the flank of the German column, held it up till nightfall. With the evacuation of Tergnier the Germans were free to move against the last defensive line where it touched the Oise, and the whole of the defensive system was in immediate peril.

Almost as far as the Oise from Bernes the third line was in German hands, and the British were standing upon hastily improvised positions preparatory to falling back. Gough's choice was whether to stand and risk almost certain annihilation which would leave a gap in the line, or to fall back, exacting the highest price for every step. His force being what it was, his decision was sound. The Germans threw in more and more divisions. This was the moment they had waited for, and in preparation for which their careful study of the conditions of mobility had been made. They had planned for a pursuit, and only in this way could they hope to achieve such a breach between the British and the French that either or both armies could be defeated. When they found later on that their high hopes had not been realised, they represented their aim as the endeavour "to drive a wedge as deeply as possible into the breaking front before the enemy had time to recover his equilibrium." It was on Saturday afternoon that the news was received in England of the grave state of things on the southern part of the line. The noon *communiqué* from General Headquarters stated that: "During the afternoon powerful hostile attacks, delivered with great weight of infantry and artillery, broke through our defensive system west of St. Quentin. Our troops on this part of the battle front are falling back in good order across the devastated area to prepared positions farther west."

The grave news produced a feeling of dismay. Never before since the first days of the Great War had such words been used. Small readjustments seemed to be of the essence of modern warfare, though all careful students had known that the beginning and the end of all wars must involve the battle of movements with its swift hazards and rapid changes. But, schooled in the long warfare of positions when a three-mile advance seemed a great thing, and the promised break never came, the ordinary human suffering man had no standards by which to judge the new conditions. The German people were just as far astray, though in the opposite direction. At the same moment that men and women in England and France were reading the bad news of the great reverse, the people of Germany were reading the jubilant words of Ludendorff's report. It was a skilful document for its purpose. The losses had been huge, though the Reichstag had been told beforehand that only by huge losses could a German peace be won. But the people had to be shown that they were getting good value for their money, and every phrase of Ludendorff's report was written with calculated skill. "The Kaiser and King" was in

command. The British had fought stubbornly. There were incessant counter-attacks. But by superior courage and higher skill all had been won, and the Germans had even "pursued the British" across Flesquières and Ribecourt. These were positions practically in the front line. But the Germans could not know that. If the report had pursued the British through *Cambrai* it would have been sufficiently good for most people. The Crown Prince Rupprecht had captured 15,000 prisoners and 250 guns, and the German Crown Prince 10,000 prisoners and 150 guns and 300 machine guns.

At first sight this seems an amazingly good figure. But recollect first that the British had perforce to leave the bulk of their wounded behind, and that the French, in the Second Battle of the Aisne, on a front of half the extent, and with a penetration far from that of the Germans, took about the same number of unwounded prisoners, and we must realise that if the Germans had departed from their usual habit of claiming as prisoners all who might conceivably in the disorder of the moment be missing, the number was not great. The struggle had been pitched on a terrible plane, and the German losses had been very heavy. British gunners had fired, until they fell from fatigue, into packed masses of Germans. Machine gunners had fired till their guns were almost out of action through over use. Aeroplanes had swooped to a low height and emptied their machine guns into the troops hastening along the roads. Never was such slaughter; never such extraordinarily sustained heroism.

On Saturday evening the German *communiqué* stated that "the first stage of the great battle in France is now ended. . . . A considerable part of the English army is beaten. We are fighting approximately on the line north-east of Bapaume-Péronne-Ham." This last sentence gives the tone of the *communiqué*. It meant just whatever the enthusiastic German mind might wish to read into it. These towns had been the destined objectives of the first day, and only one, Ham, had fallen on the third, after tremendous street fighting. Cavalry were moving down the roads centring upon Ham to make good the breach between the British and French. But the latter were already being engaged on the left, and French reserves were being hurried across to make good the British losses west of St. Quentin. The earliest French reinforcements were the 125th Division of the 6th Army on Gough's right. Later came other troops of Humbert's 3rd Army, and the 1st Army was under orders. Soon they were to form a compact army under Fayolle, who had won his earlier laurels on the Somme, and then had gone to Italy with the French troops. But the first stage of the battle had ended. The old defensive system had been pierced, and for some days new battles were to be fought.

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At this stage we may suitably inquire into the reason of the difference between the operations of Byng's and of Gough's army. General Gough shortly afterwards was recalled. There was, of course, sufficient reason for this in his defeat, for armies are at least as sensitive as horses, who react very quickly to ill-luck in their rider. Gough's name soon became the theme of much discussion, and he was abused very heartily by many. Gough was, of course, no genius. His conduct of the Battle of Ypres seems to have been unduly wasteful of life, and he does not give the impression of a full grip of the position. But in fairness it must be stated that there were circumstances that extenuated his defeat. One or two of these have already been mentioned. On the misty morning when the Germans unloosed upon the defenders the inferno of an unheard-of bombardment, Gough's army held a line forty-two miles



in extent from La Vacquerie to Barisis, south of the Oise, with fourteen infantry and three cavalry divisions. Only eleven of these were actually in the front line. Against this force there were ranged some forty-seven divisions in all, and more than twenty-five were actually in the front line. Gough's divisions had just been weakened by the withdrawal of three out of the thirteen normal battalions, and the effectives per battalion were reduced by almost a third. If we take them as roughly equal to the German units, there were over three to one against them over the whole front; and as the units were not thrown in uniformly, but used as the opportunity promised best, at places the odds reached five and seven to one. These men, again, had only been two months in line, and had spent the bulk of their time in organising the forward and near defences. They were out-gunned by nearly three to one. Almost all the guns had been brought across from the Russian front, and there were also some heavy Austrian batteries. The German troops were fresh and freshly trained, and put in against the thin line of weary, overworked men of the defence. Outposts were overwhelmed before they had properly taken in the fact that the Germans were upon them, and by the night of the first day efforts were being made with the reserve divisions to stem the tide that flowed through at least four appreciable breaches. Some of the troops wavered under the terrible strain; others fought over-valiantly, and Gough had to decide whether to risk annihilation by pitting his whole body to this point, or to withdraw the shattered units to re-form and impose a more uniform front to the enemy. It lost a rough third of its guns, the bulk damaged and put out of order first. It is quite possible that his guns might have been kept farther back, his men less concentrated in the front line, and his reserves more available. But it is difficult to see how these changes could have made any radical difference. His army was risked, and lost many men; but it remained in being as an army, and held the fate of the Allies honourably in its hand until French reinforcements arrived.

Haig knew the hazard he was called upon to face, and plans had been concerted with the French to meet every eventuality. As the chief risk fell upon Gough's army, and Haig had not the troops to provide against attacks over the whole of his front, it was arranged that such reserves as he had at his disposal should be put into the line north of Péronne; and in fact eight divisions were taken from Flanders and sent south before the end of the month. Pétain was to reinforce the line below the Somme; and in order that the French might be in time to avert disaster, plans were made for a stand on the Somme. "Arrangements had been made for the construction of a strong and carefully sited bridgehead position covering Péronne and the crossings of the river Somme south of that town. Considerable progress had been made in the laying out of this position, though at the outbreak of the enemy's offensive its defences were incomplete." But there was no provision for the instantaneous reinforcement that was needed. Gough was left in a position of the utmost peril. Haig could do nothing to relieve it. Within a month of the opening of the offensive 355,000 troops were sent from England. Half the number would have made the line safe a month earlier. Or if the French had placed in Gough's rear half the men who were later engaged there, all would have been well. Gough was sacrificed to the divergent interests of the statesmen of France and Britain.

## III. THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE SOMME: THE SECOND PHASE.

THE first phase had left the British defensive system pierced on an extensive front, and the widest vistas opened before both groups. The German Staff knew full well that already the cost had been too heavy for the gain; but the impetus of the attack was not yet broken, and there were still chances that everything might go as it had been designed. To the Allies the very strangeness of the prospect was almost unnerving. Yet in England the detached observer might have been struck with the fact that, at the moment, not a word was heard counselling any change in the terms the Allies had announced. It was only when the Allies looked victorious that critics were heard to suggest negotiation, just as it was only when Germany looked defeated that moderation prevailed. The disaster to the Allied arms had the effect of convincing the United States that it was necessary to speed up the sending of American troops to France; and soon the ships were speeding across the Atlantic with their great numbers of finely developed young men. It had one other effect which no lover of France could but regret. It threw a greater strain upon those valiant troops—the best in Europe—who had fought so heroically and suffered so uncomplainingly for nearly four years.

The second stage of the great battle saw the British armies on the Somme from Ham northwards. Positions were still held east of Péronne, and from the city the line lay east of the Bapaume road, making a salient about Bertincourt and then bending west and north by Mory and Henniel to the old line. The long-range gun, which had begun to bombard Paris from positions eighty miles away the day before, resumed its slow booming and deepened the impression of disaster. The critical days were yet to come. Sunday witnessed the reaping of the earlier successes. The Germans directed their chief efforts against the junctions of the 3rd and 5th Armies and of the 5th and French Armies. The day was again misty, and the first attempts to cross the Somme were made with this advantage. But at St. Christ and Béthencourt the assault was held. Midway between, at Pargny, a crossing was effected, and the Germans pushed steadily westward, pressing back the left wing of the 20th Division to Morchain. Gradually, too, the assailants advanced between the Somme and the Oise. The 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions made gallant attempts to arrest the advance, but only succeeded in imposing a momentary check. Chauny was evacuated under pressure, and the right of the 20th Division fell back upon Guiscard. But a more critical movement had taken place to the north of the Somme. A vigorous thrust against the junction of the 3rd and 5th Armies compelled the evacuation of Bertincourt early in the day. Above the Somme the 7th Corps heroically attempted to bear up against the ceaseless attacks. North of Cléry the South Africans, who had so finely defended Gauche Wood, fought till late afternoon in Marrières Wood, until only 100 men remained unwounded and all their ammunition was spent. But meanwhile the Germans were marching round the flank of the 4th Corps, and Byng had to withdraw his right wing upon Bazentin. The 63rd Naval Division gallantly covered the retirement, and timely reinforcements filled the gap. The 7th Corps henceforward came under Byng's direction, and the 3rd under that of Humbert. At nightfall the line seemed to be crumbling over a considerable extent. Below the Somme the 19th Corps was six miles east of the 7th to the north of the river. The corps of Byng's right and some of the divisions had almost lost touch with each other



It was on these units the heaviest blow fell on Monday. Péronne and Bapaume had been abandoned, and during the day the right and centre of Byng's army retired on the Ancre, leaving the 7th Corps standing between Albert and Bray. The 5th Corps, with its left at Beaumont, had lost touch with the 4th. But this grave situation was not so bad as that below the Somme. By the retirement to the north the 19th and 18th Corps had been left some miles to the east. A wedge was driven between them, and but for the arrival of a detachment of the 20th Division they could not have presented a united front below Frise. The Allied front between Serre and the Roye-Noyon road showed a tendency to break up completely. It was at this moment that a conference of the Allies was held at Doullens, and Foch, the greatest general cast up by the war, was selected as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces. The hour called for unflinching courage, instantaneous decision, an instinctive appreciation of essentials, and these qualities were to be found in one general alone. The crisis then at hand swept away all the political disadvantages which had before made the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief a doubtful gain. But the Allies gained more from the person than from the principle involved. Unity of command could not prevent the darker days in April 1917, as it did not save the Germans from defeat; but Foch was the one general who never lost his courage or his calm, never failed to distinguish the essential in the many crying needs of the moment.

On Tuesday morning the situation was all but desperate. The two remaining corps of the 5th Army, the 19th and 18th, were almost at the end of their resources. There were no further reserves available, and the troops were out of touch with the 3rd Army north of the Somme and with the French below Roye. North of the Somme the situation was worse. The Germans had seized their chance above Hamel and had pushed past Serre to Colincamps. The 4th Corps was now completely cut off from the 5th. But the situation was restored later in the day by the New Zealand Division, who, with the new light British tanks, the Whippets, retook the village. A brigade of the 4th Australian Division, whose boast it was to appear whenever hard fighting was afoot, appeared on the right of the 4th Corps, and this sector of the front came finally to rest. But the 7th Corps on the Somme withdrew from Bray to Sailly-le-Sec under the mistaken impression that the Ancre was to be the final line. The Bray-Albert positions could not be regained, and the withdrawal had not been discovered by the Staff until Sailly was reached. The left flank of the 19th Corps lay five miles to the east, below the river, with only an improvised force of 350 men, with Lewis guns and armoured cars, to protect the crossings. The right of the 5th Army was hardly in better case; and though the 30th and 36th Divisions were recalled from a day's rest to fill the gap between the 5th Army and the French, the line of weary men was thin and wavering. But the French had held off the Germans from the Oise at Noyon, and for the moment also stood in front of Montdidier.

During the night the Germans entered Albert after fighting with the rearguards in the town; but the troops took up a position on the railway embankment, and were able to prevent an advance to the west. About midday a heavy series of attacks was delivered against the positions between Bucquoy and Hamelincourt in which the villages of Ablainzeville and Alette were taken. At other places north of the Somme there were only minor readjustments, and some prisoners were captured. South of the river the struggle was critical throughout the day. General Débeney, whose 1st Army was to form the left wing of Fayolle's command, had the rôle of saving Amiens; but he had first to safeguard his railhead at Montdidier,

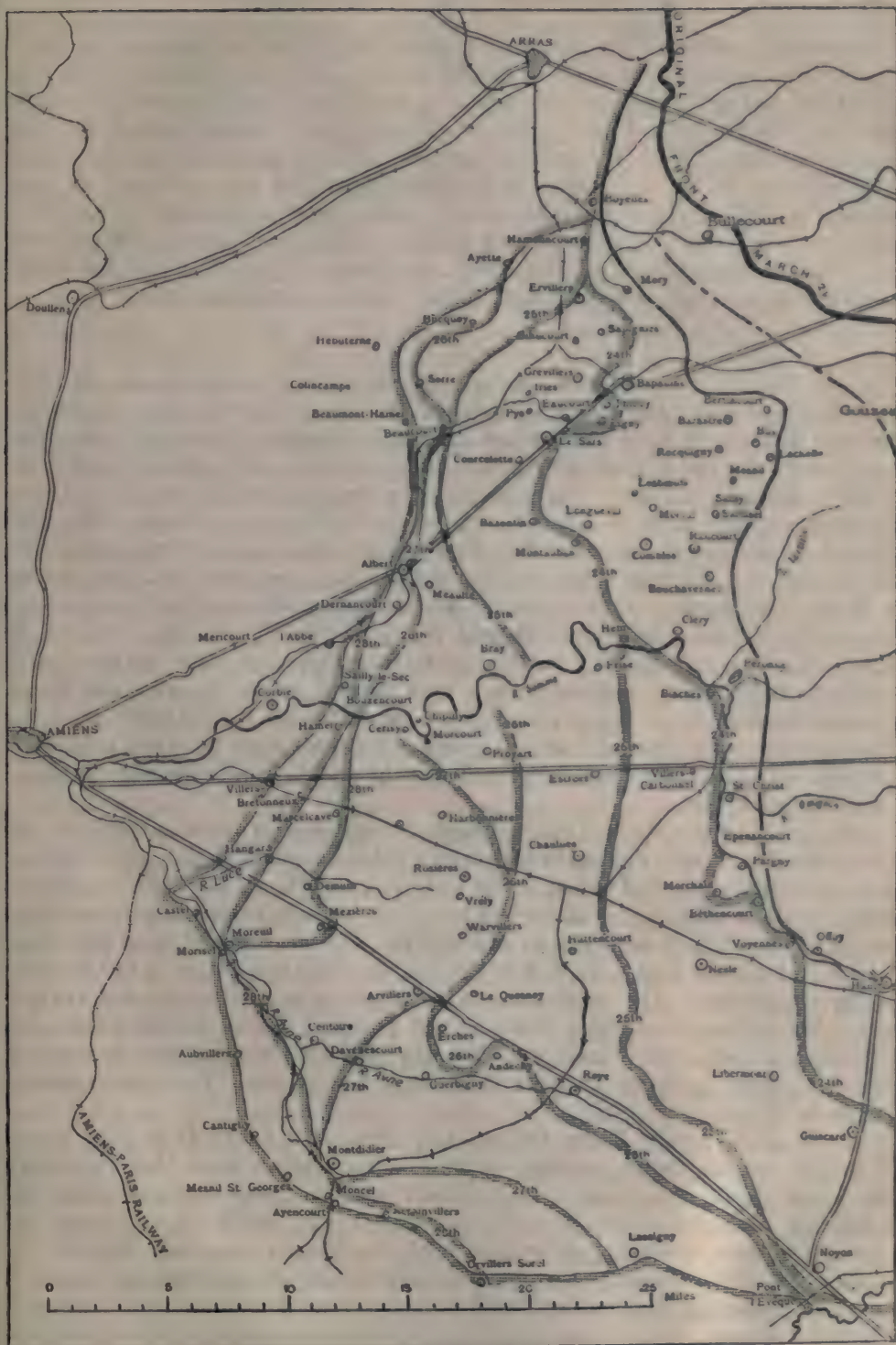
the chief means of bringing up the units of his command. On Wednesday morning, however, he found himself with both his flanks threatened. He had been told that Bray would be held. By the unfortunate blunder of the preceding day the town had been abandoned; and the Germans, early on Wednesday, began to cross the Somme west of the town in the rear of the 5th Army. Under this attack, supported by assaults below the river, the 19th Corps was forced south and west, and the 1st Cavalry Division had to be rapidly put across the river to close the gap. Farther south the 8th Division stood all day steadfast against the repeated attacks at Rozières. Débeney saw at a glance that his left was prejudiced by the new developments south of the river. Meanwhile his right was more immediately threatened. Roye had been abandoned the day before, and the left of Humbert's army seemed to be breaking up into detached units. The gaps were stopped by miscellaneous troops collected from Pelle's Staff; but on Wednesday this composite front was attacked with the greatest vigour and the Germans broke through on the left, cut the main southern road from Montdidier, and entered the town. All sorts of improvised vehicles from motor omnibuses to farm wagons were again pressed into service to form a link between Débeney's and Humbert's armies. The gap was closed; but the railhead was lost, and the British were left standing in a salient between the Luce and Avre rivers.

The capture of Amiens now became the direct objective of the Germans. Their troops were almost as weary as the Allies'. They were almost forty miles from their point of departure. The country in which they lay was desolate and ill fitted to support an advance, and the Allied aeroplanes were constantly engaged in bombing the few poor roads. The Allies had not been separated; but the capture of Amiens would have made a renewal of the attempt easier and would have had a great political effect. On Thursday, the 28th, Hutier developed his attack astride the Amiens road, and very skilfully struck at the flanks of the remnant of the 5th Army. The Germans reached Bayonvillers and compelled the troops in the salient to bring back their flank to Marcelcave. They occupied Guillaucourt and struck southwards at the same time that they occupied Contoire in the rear of the right flank. The troops had now to fall back to the line Mezières-Marcelcave, where a composite force had been formed by Gough to defend the approaches to Amiens. This force, composed of "details, stragglers, schools personnel, tunnelling companies, army troops companies, field survey companies, and Canadian and American engineers," had been formed on the 25th by General Grant, the chief engineer to the 5th Army, but later handed over to General Carey. Until they were relieved on the 31st, this motley force, assisted by the 1st Cavalry Division, fought off the Germans from their objective. From this day it formed the chief part of the 5th Army which Rawlinson and his Staff took over.

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Meanwhile Below fought and lost a heavy battle astride the Scarpe. Between Pusieux and Vimy eleven divisions were thrown against the British line, and there were subsidiary attacks as far south as Dernancourt. The day was clear and the British guns caused heavy casualties in the Germans while they were still concentrating. At Rœux on the Scarpe they fired point blank into the dense mass of infantry, who advanced in six lines, shoulder to shoulder. Where the British wire had been broken some of the shock troops got through, but the machine gunners in the outpost line held their ground and took the assailants in front and in flank





The Stages in the German Advance.

as opportunity offered. The first attack failed, and in the late afternoon a second attempt was made, after a renewed bombardment. But it was checked decisively, and at the end of the day not only were the battle positions intact over the whole front, but the troops had even sufficient force to counter-attack and throw out a new outpost line. Little by little the garrison of the original outpost line fought their way back to the 3rd Army, the last being a party of Seaforth's, who returned during the night. The German attempt to widen the front of their advance had failed, and the Vimy position remained a thorn in their side. Ludendorff attached the "highest importance" to this attack, and he is very frank about the heavy losses of Below's army, which, he says, "fought under an unlucky star." \*

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Good Friday, the 29th, saw renewed attacks south of the Somme. Mezières was evacuated under the continued pressure, but the attempt to push southwards between Noyon and Roye was checked; and the Germans, advancing in the open, were caught by the French guns and heavily punished. Fayolle had now some twenty infantry and three cavalry divisions in the line, and he was able to view the prospect with more composure. On the 30th the main German effort was again directed towards Amiens. Below the Somme little headway was made, since the guns of the 3rd Australian Division firing across the river took the advance in flank. But farther south there was fierce fighting between the Luce and the Avre. The Germans penetrated Moreuil Wood, but were driven back by a fierce charge of a Canadian Cavalry and the 3rd Cavalry Brigades. But the line had to be drawn farther west, and the French were pressed across the Avre and Doms. The fighting now died down, and on 1st April Débeney extended his left to the Luce, thereby relieving the worn-out British troops. For a few days there was only desultory fighting, though the 32nd Division, in a night attack, very brilliantly recaptured the village of Ayette.

One last effort was made to disorganise the Franco-British defence, which was now fast hardening. Under this heavy attack on 4th April the British line, after inflicting heavy loss, was compelled to retire west of Hamel and Hangard. Débeney's troops were compelled to give ground west of the Avre, and the Germans were now near enough to the Paris-Amiens line to interrupt it. But the moment when this would have been vital was long past, and on the following day there were no further gains of any significance. The fighting broke out again between Bucquoy and Dernancourt, but without materially changing the position. South of the Somme the advantage lay with the French, who in a day of the fiercest fighting succeeded in improving their positions between Montdidier and Noyon. The great offensive had flickered out.

For some days the "Kaiser Battle" had given place to the Ludendorff Battle. It was apparently found necessary to inform the German press that Ludendorff was in charge for the future. The Kaiser's name had only appeared when the battle had succeeded in breaking the line, and it only remained while there still seemed a chance of pushing the success until the Allied armies were divided. As soon as this will-o'-the-wisp had vanished the Kaiser, wearied with his labour of generalship, disappeared, and left his generals to take the odium of the losses. It was found necessary to state that these were not abnormal; but some of the admis-



sions, such as that of von Stein, that two-thirds of the company officers had been killed in many units, could hardly have been reassuring.

Yet the offensive had been most carefully planned. Everything had been thought out. Even the mysterious great gun that began its tolling among the Parisian houses when the "break through" had been accomplished was part of the plan. Its aim was to cause a panic among the Parisians, to make them believe that the Germans were once again at the gates of Paris. On 29th March one of the shells of this monster gun fell upon a church where people were attending a service. It was Good Friday, one of the most sacred days of the year to religious people. Many people were killed, among them being a member of the Swiss Legation. The fact did not disturb the Germans. The gun was firing at a range of over eighty miles, and the Germans had a comfortable military explanation of the reasonableness of their action. Paris was for the future in the war zone. What consistent theory could underlie such an explanation only the German military mind could discover. For if a place is to be in the military zone because shells can be hurled into it, every place is in the military zone, because all are open to the bombardment of aeroplanes. Yet the bizarre and unscrupulous note of the offensive must not blind us to its genius. The plan was good. It had been thought out carefully, so that everything was provided for which it was possible to foresee; and it is certain that no one in the Allied countries before the battle would have believed that the Germans could have achieved so much. It is true that the Germans had not cut off the British from the French. It is true that they had not captured Amiens. It is true that at the end of a week their blow was spent, and in ten days was definitely parried. But it had forced the Allies back over the old Somme battlefield in places farther west than the Germans had ever been since 1914. A great British army was out of the fight, withdrawn after the heaviest losses in men and material; and the northern army was much weakened despite its splendid stand. The Germans at this point claimed to have captured over 1,000 guns and 75,000 prisoners. Territory means little, but it means something; and the territory lost to the Germans in this great battle left the Allies with little manœuvring ground should another such blow fall.

On the other hand, the Germans had put in about eighty divisions, and their losses must have been close upon 300,000 men. For ten days' fighting that was a costly bill to reckon with, and something of it was bound to leak out. Further, although every ounce of moral and political effect was drawn from the success, it is incredible that it was satisfactory to the German Staff. The ground which they won was the most desolate in France. The Germans had left it so when they fell back the year before. Hence the stupidity of the lie that the British were burning "the French villages in their retreat." There were no villages to burn. They had been treated with characteristic German thoroughness by another retreating army the year before. There was scarcely a roof in the length and breadth of all this land. There was no food. Empty and desolate and wholly terrible all of it—how could it be an objective for any one? Moreover, the line was nearly forty miles longer, and would immobilise a greater number of men to garrison it. Finally, the offensive had come to rest from sheer inanition.

This is to sum up its failure. The very swiftness of the advance, failing such swiftness as would divide the Allies, had brought it to a halt over a torn and ruined country in which the communications could not possibly support further operations.

The spearpoint of the thrust, the specially trained shock troops, marched with six days' emergency rations. The colossal effrontery of this procedure needs no emphasis. The men's kit even included spare boots, and after marching in some cases forty miles on such terms with an enemy always in front and always attacking, it had perforce to come to a halt. The offensive had run down so far as the original plan was concerned. Ludendorff intended to fight *à outrance*; but even in such a mind he could not resume until he had provided for normal supplies, against a reconstituted line. It was one of the great battles of history. The mind reels before its stupendous ideas, its ambition, its impudence, and even its success. But the first and immediate end had been successful. The first stage was a victory. The second was a failure. Gough's rally must not be underestimated. All that was gained was implied in the success of the first stage. But the possibility for which all had been staked, the chance of cutting the armies asunder, and of flinging back the British reeling on the coast, this remained a dream, and before this conviction sank into the minds of the German people some other plan must be tried. That plan was the Battle of the Lys.

#### IV. THE BATTLE OF THE LYS.

UNDER any circumstances the Battle of the Lys would have attracted the world's attention, and would have produced a very disturbing impression. The point of the thrust looked directly towards Calais, and for three weeks the fate of the Channel ports hung in the balance. But the actual impression was far greater than it would otherwise have been, because it fell upon people whose minds were not yet recovered from the shock of the great advance upon Amiens.

Ludendorff's choice for the terrain of a new attack was founded upon the desire to widen the area of the Somme attack. Below's 17th Army should have seized the high ground about Arras, and the 6th Army would then have continued the attack about Lens. The Battle of the Lys was to be a prolongation of the front of attack. But when Below was so decisively checked about Arras, it was decided to abandon the attack by the southern wing of the 6th Army. The Lys attack on 9th April therefore represented only a part of Ludendorff's plan; but it was developed with bold opportunism. Arras and its immediate neighbourhood had been tried and proved too strong. To the north the ground falls into three types: a flattish crescent north of La Bassée, a ridge area up to Dixmude, and the flooded ground west of Dixmude to the sea. The ground between La Bassée and Armentières offered real attractions. On this sector, the most quiescent between the sea and Switzerland, the German Staff knew that five out of the seven divisions in the line had been heavily engaged in the Somme area and were now resting. One, the 55th, composed of Lancashire troops, was described as of second-rate quality in orders found upon the Germans. Whether the Staff believed this, or were merely playing upon the German instinct to prefer easy to difficult tasks, no one can say. Again, though the Germans had failed in cutting off the British from the French, a real break through on this sector offered the chance of cutting off a section of the British troops—an idea of the same type as that which inspired the original attack, but less ambitious and easier of accomplishment. Furthermore, the Vimy Ridge and the northern point of Byng's army might be turned by a



successful advance against Béthune. Finally, there were the Channel ports, Calais and Dunkirk, the loss of which would impose so serious a strain upon the lines of British over-Channel reinforcement that the chances of a complete or partial decision would be immensely improved. In the first two stages of the battle 200,000 British troops had been thrown into France in ten days, and guns and ammunition had been sent to make good all losses. But this was only possible with a sea voyage of a necessary extent of but twenty-one miles; and if the British could be compelled to transfer their base to Havre, the possibilities of such reinforcement in the face of the submarine campaign would be greatly weakened. And, of course, the Channel ports once won, it would be possible to hamper still more the Allied sea communications, to instal more of the new long-range guns and render untenable the south-eastern fringe of England, and make more feasible the prospect of a sudden raid with German troops. And hence, although Byng's resistance had already gravely imperilled the success of Ludendorff's plan, the attack in the Lys area offered many attractions.

A desultory bombardment had been kept up over most of the northern front during the whole of the Battle of the Somme. On 7th April an unusually heavy bombardment was delivered between Lens and Armentières. On the 8th it fell chiefly over the sector stretching from Houplines on the Lys, north-east of Armentières, to the La Bassée Canal, some twelve miles to the south-west. The British front made there a sort of chord upon the curve of the Lys and its small tributary, the Lawe. During the night the bombardment worked up to an extraordinary pitch of intensity. Shells of every calibre, of gas and high explosive, fell thick and fast over the whole area. Gun positions and concentration centres, ammunition dumps and billets far behind the line, were covered with the terrible spray of the German guns. Over 60,000 gas shells alone were flung across this short sector during the night, and when the intenser bombardment of the actual defensive wall began the troops had already lived through a night of unforgettable horror. With an unusual versatility of cunning the bombardment had been interrupted between midnight and 4 o'clock in the morning, and the terrible stillness and isolation of those four hours after eight hours of heavy shelling did their work in sapping the spirit of the men. At about 4 o'clock the intenser preparation began, and continued until about half-past five. All the flat and marshy land east of the Lys and below La Bassée was drenched in gas and pitted by explosive shell when at the first lifting of the curtain of night the German infantry advanced.

There was again a thin veil of mist over the ground between the German shock troops and the three Allied divisions which held the front against them. About Neuve Chapelle lay the 2nd Portuguese Division with the 55th Division on its right and the 40th British Division on its left. Against this handful of troops eleven divisions of von Quast's 6th Army were thrown in the first day of the attack, and from captured orders we can see how carefully the situation had been reconnoitred. The brigades holding the line were faithfully named, and even the battalions held in reserve from them. The attack was first aimed at the Portuguese, who had long been in the line and were to have been withdrawn the next day; but after the shock had fallen, and when the troops were struggling valiantly against heavy odds, the assault was rapidly extended southwards to La Bassée and northwards to Armentières. Under the shock the Portuguese troops gave way. The first, second, and third lines were rapidly overrun, and by 11 o'clock Laventie was taken.

Before noon the centre had been completely pierced, though little islands of men held their heads above the incessant waves of Germans even up to 2 o'clock in the afternoon. In six hours the work of two days against Gough's thin lines had been accomplished, and the British divisions which were coping successfully with the attack found their flanks uncovered. There was a wide gap in the line; but, as in every attack, the attempt had to be made to drive in the pivots on the flanks unless the assailants would content themselves by merely producing a wedge which would be expensive, if not impossible to hold. It is precisely in this improvement of local gains that the Germans were still superior to the British troops. Long training and military tradition had done its work, and where a British unit would have been powerless to hold a narrow salient the Germans were instant in organising and improving tactical gains. The first blow was struck by four divisions which had been rapidly doubled, and four of the total force engaged was quickly thrown against Givenchy, which was the focus of the resistance in front of Béthune, the objective of the first day's attack. Givenchy rests upon a little knoll in the flat country, and it was held by those same "second quality" troops of the 55th Division which had been advertised as easy victims for the German shock troops. Men of urban areas in Western Lancashire, Liverpool men many of them, recruited from the desk and the factory, on a normal reckoning they should have been easy to persuade to abandon their trust.

The breach in the line was hardly complete before Givenchy fell to the furious onslaught of four German divisions of General von Kraewel's corps; but an almost immediate recoil wrested the ruined town from them, and took 550 prisoners. The Germans returned to the attack, and fought all day with fresh troops to retake the town. In the darkness they forced their way into the streets, but by next morning the position was again in hand. The troops of the 40th Division on the northern flank also held firmly to their positions, though their flank was gradually pressed back to the Lys at Saily, and thus shepherded the German thrust into a narrow area. But in the centre the shock troops forced their way onward. At Bac St. Maur General von Stettin's corps crossed the river and established a bridgehead about Croix du Bac. The staunch defence between Armentières and Fleurbaix, where the 12th Suffolks stood till evening, and the splendid stand at Givenchy prevented what might have been irretrievable disaster. The Germans appear to have penetrated a mile beyond the river, but with the flanks still firm it was possible to throw reserves against the point of the salient and push it in. The break was nine miles wide and about five deep, and although it had not yielded all that had been intended, the German Staff, fighting on purely opportunist lines, determined to make the most of the initial success. On Wednesday the left flank of General von Armin's 4th Army joined the battle, and the front of attack was extended to Hollebeke. Armin struck at the Messines Ridge. Hollebeke fell at once, and the troops to the south pushed across the Lys round Ploegsteert Wood, turned that position, and were able to command the reverse of the Messines Ridge. The situation became at once critical. The ridge would have been almost invincible to direct assault alone, but this attack from the east, combined with an advance from the south towards the rear of the position, made the operation most formidable. At midday the 9th Division made a vigorous counter-attack, and by evening had recovered the bulk of the ridge, and the South African Brigade had forced the Germans out of Messines. But while this was taking place, Armentières, smothered in gas, was being evacuated.





Stages in the Battle of the Lys.

The operation was not complete before the Germans had swept past it, and the town, with 3,000 men and their general, fell into their hands on the afternoon of the 11th.

At the end of the second day the position was revolutionised. From Lestrem to the north the Germans were across the Lys, and about two miles west of Armentières. Lestrem, held for a moment, had been lost again to the violent attack of the corps commanded by the notorious General von Bernhardt. Ploegsteert Wood was almost wholly in German hands, and the attackers were clinging to the edge of the Messines Ridge. Already some sixteen German divisions had been flung in, and the Staff do not seem to have provided for a sufficiently rapid reinforcement. On Thursday, 11th, there was a little breathing space, though the day gave considerable gains to the Germans. Lestrem was evacuated under a heavy attack; the Lawe, turned from the north, was crossed; and Merville fell into Bernhardt's hands. But to the north the Germans made hardly any further impression upon Ploegsteert Wood. Another attack upon Messines Wood had been made, but without success, the 9th Division throwing back the assailants with heavy loss.

It was upon this day that Haig, a man of few and measured words, issued his order which terrified while it fired the bewildered spectators from afar. "There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end. The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind depend alike upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment." Friday and Saturday were indeed critical days. A sudden attack at dawn, west of the Lawe, broke through the thin line of the 51st Division at Pacaut, and only the heroism and skill of its batteries prevented the Germans crossing the La Bassée Canal. The double line railway between Béthune and Hazebrouck came under fire with this advance, and gravely hampered reinforcements from the south. Farther to the north a gap was made in the line of the 29th Division, and Carlowitz's corps seized Outtersteene and Merris. A brigade of the 33rd Division, with cyclists, pioneers, and school staff, were hastily thrown in and restored the line. Farther east Neuve Eglise was taken during the night, and the 2nd Army began that series of withdrawals from the advanced positions in the Ypres salient which told unambiguously how gravely the German successes had already prejudiced the Allied line in Flanders. Until this day the Germans had only occupied the low ground which lies in the horseshoe of hilly country; but with the attack at Neuve Eglise they began to mount the higher ground.

Neuve Eglise was recaptured about noon on Saturday, and the Germans were then left precariously clinging to the fringe of the rising ground not far from the station on the double line track at Bailleul. The attack and recapture of Neuve Eglise may be taken as a symbol of the battle. Fresh and still more troops had been poured in, and though the bulk of them fell under the machine-gun fire from the defenders, each little streamlet that filtered through swelled the volume until it was thought strong enough for a concerted charge up the streets. Fighting of this sort cannot be inexpensive, and it is seldom speedy; but given the persistence it must prevail. On Friday night the Germans had the village; but the wearied units came back with a rush the next day, and the Germans were pushed back. Bailleul, which the Germans regarded as their chief local objective, was kept constantly under fire, and the enemy guns swept all the hinterland incessantly. Below



these hills the battle scene presented the picture which an imaginative artist might have described as the crater of hell. Burning villages peeped through the heavy smoke, and at times the red-hot guns. Seams of shining water gleamed here and there, criss-cross over the flat horseshoe of land. Slow drifts of yellow khaki showed up. At times limping soldiers staggered forward to the dressing-stations. Screams of horses and roars of shells rent the air. It was filled with fumes, and took definition from the darting tongues of flame. And in the midst of this inferno, in the very thick of the bombardment on the Mont des Cats, a band of Trappist monks, who had seen a German occupation and many vicissitudes, still went on with their prayers.

The position at Neuve Eglise could not remain as it was. Throughout Saturday, during the night and on Sunday, the Germans attacked again and again, pushing up the slope from the open flat ground only to be hurled back once more. Four concerted attacks were made during Saturday, and one greater attack from Meteren to Wulverghem was delivered with the object of pinning down the reinforcements. About Neuve Eglise the struggle swayed and eddied, but the position was not engulfed. That Sunday the battle cast up strange vicissitudes. On the southern front of the concave curve the attacks were thrown back. This defence, in which the 4th Guards Brigade fought with especial steadfastness, was the most brilliant of the offensive, and when the Germans at length got through it was to find the 1st Australian Division established east of Nieppe Forest, blocking the way to Hazebrouck. Small disjointed engagements were fiercely contested, and every yard yielded cost its price. In Neuve Eglise the most terrible street fighting took place. On at least three occasions the Germans got through the village, only to be hurled back in disorder. At nightfall the village still lay in the hands of the British, but its strength had been worn down by advances on its flanks, and during the darkness it was evacuated and the line was re-established to the north.

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The enemy by this time had gained tangible successes and was encouraged to continue. The battle had involved more and more German divisions. It opened with twelve divisions. Eight more were involved on the third day, and two more were thrown in on Sunday, the bulk of them densely packed on each side of Bailleul. On Monday the Germans, using their positions at Neuve Eglise as a starting-point, gained a hold on the hilly ridge to the north (the Ravelsberg Spur), which put Bailleul at a great disadvantage; and a vigorous attack by two fresh divisions of Marschall's corps carried the coveted village. At midday the exhausted defenders were in a difficult position. The Germans had pushed into Wytschaete, on which the defence pivoted, and had also entered Meteren. A heavy drive forward with new troops threatened to capture Kemmel and the whole of the ridge upon which the defence of the area depended. It was in view of such a danger that General Plumer had wisely withdrawn his line about Ypres. On Monday night a second readjustment was carried out with great deliberation. During this time, the Germans, in complete ignorance, were continuing to shell the old trenches, and only on Tuesday afternoon (16th) did they venture to advance. Even then the few outposts who had been left behind caught the unwary patrols, and took their revenge before retiring. The line, therefore, at midday on Tuesday, was much stronger for defence, but the thrust up the spurs past Kemmel became very threatening. Meteren and Wytschaete had been approached under cover of the morning mist. The usual skilful tactics of infiltration threatened to establish a new base of attack at Meteren for an approach

to Cassel. But the Germans were closely held to the outskirts of the village. In the afternoon counter-attacks were delivered, Meteren was retaken with great dash, and the troops even penetrated into Wytschaete, but the positions were abandoned under further enemy attacks. And the French troops who now began to enter the line failed to eject the Germans.

It was on Wednesday, the 17th, that an important engagement was fought by the Belgians. The critical hours of Tuesday had passed, but the pulse of the moment had been correctly taken by the German Staff. French troops were entering the battle, and the few torn miles of tumbled ground north of Bailleul were filling with determined reinforcements. It was perfectly correct, therefore, to cast upon the Allied Staff the burden of fresh anxieties. The battle had had the effect of concentrating the Franco-British forces just as the prize seemed within reach. Two attacks were, therefore, planned, whose plain object was dispersion. One of these was aimed at the north-east of the flattened Ypres salient where the Belgians stood, and the other was flung against the southern face of the concave curve which the successes had pushed into the Allied position. During the night an intense bombardment was directed against the Belgian positions. A little after eight in the morning the Germans advanced north of Langemarck on a front of four miles. The enemy had concentrated several divisions, giving him a local superiority of Prussians, Bavarians, and Marine infantry. The first assaults carried the enemy into positions in the Belgian front line. But the Belgians counter-attacked almost at once with the greatest decision, recovered the bulk of their positions, and took 600 prisoners. By the evening the Belgians had recovered all the lost ground, despite renewed attacks, and had taken another 100 prisoners, a field gun, two mine-throwers, and forty-two machine guns. It was a brilliant little victory, which surprised both friend and foe by its completeness.

The second attempt to relieve the concentration and reopen the closing door north of Bailleul was fought on the following day by the famous Bernhardi. The area of the thrust was that stretch of ground which lay between Givenchy and the Nieppe Forest, and against the British troops in the line Bernhardi concentrated six divisions. The immediate object of the attack was to cut the Béthune Canal and the communications with the north which it covered. It will be noted that all this time the Germans were fighting forward in a salient and were subject to the cross-fire from this obdurate flank. A considerable sweep of ground was continually being pounded by the shell from the back of the canal. For seven hours in the early morning fresh German batteries hurled their shell against the sector to be attacked. Guns up to 11-inch calibre were ranged against it, and particularly against Givenchy. No ordinary words can describe the heroism of those tired men of the Gloucesters and Lancashires who bore undaunted the last four hours of enemy shelling. But when the shock troops advanced at nine in the morning the British troops ran forward with their Lewis guns into the open, and there took their toll of the enemy. They fought their guns until the Germans were within fifty or sixty yards of the muzzles, and then slipped back to their trench positions. Into the outer defences of Givenchy and Festubert the Germans pushed, but were there held, despite repeated assaults. Along the canal bank the struggle reverted to older battle types, and the Lancashires fought grimly with their bayonets. A little after noon, by bayonet and bomb, the Lancashire men had cleared almost the whole of their line. In some places the men fought impossible battles with their positions turned.



Welshmen were fighting with their faces to the south, as the Gloucesters fought northwards and westwards. From Festubert to Givenchy the struggle was continuous for almost twelve hours. North-east of Béthune the battle welled over into the night. The struggles for the canal crossings were strongest in the darkness. The Germans had established themselves in Pacaut Wood and the positions to the west. Repeated attempts were made about four o'clock to debouch from the wood with pontoons, and the small groups showed up vaguely in the light of the star shells. A pontoon was thrown across, but it was not long enough, and the men fell into the water before the defenders on the farther bank. Two pontoons were captured, and after a terribly raking fire from the British machine guns a party of nearly 200 Germans waved a white flag and surrendered. More prisoners were taken during the morning, and the British recovered the whole of their original defences. Bernhardt's attack had proved a costly reverse, and it is a little strange that the Flanders battle was continued when it had been clearly proved that there was no hope of final victory to be seen in the area.

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The battle had now lasted eleven days. It had pushed a deep **D** into the Allied line, and had compelled the evacuation of part of the Passchendaele Ridge. The Germans claimed to have taken 20,000 prisoners and 400 guns. For almost a week the battle now died down into an uneasy pause. But the enemy had suffered too heavily to be capable of any formidable thrust in this area, and the time was given to regrouping and reorganisation. The direction of danger, and from the German side of hope, lay between Bailleul and Cassel, where the Germans had worn down the Allied bridgehead across the Channel very considerably, and their eyes were already fixed upon Calais in the distance. Before the Battle of the Lys entered upon its second and final phase another attempt at dispersion was made. The Germans had realised that against the increasing concentration on the north they could do little. They now began an attack south of the Somme with the purpose of widening the sphere of Allied anxieties.

For some time the Somme area had sunk to comparative rest. In the early hours of the morning of the 23rd heavy bombardment broke out over two sectors. About Sailly, where the Australians held the front, there was a severe bombardment, and vigorous attacks were later delivered. But the troops reacted at once, and two determined attempts to make headway were beaten off with heavy loss. To the south the struggle was more important and protracted. The assault at Sailly was meant to be a feint covering the thrust toward Amiens, and this was made at the junction of the British and French troops. The condition of success in such attempts to make a breach between two armies is that the objects with which they are pre-occupied should be so different as to result in a tendency to retreat on divergent lines in face of a serious threat. The German plan, with its serious threat to the coast behind the British and its equally dangerous glance towards Paris, was meant to involve this divergence of interest, and when the attack began on 23rd April it started with this advantage. The sector selected for attack was the four miles from above Villers-Bretonneux to below Hangard. The former was held by British troops, the latter by French. It was a straight stretch of line from north to south, standing like the base of an isosceles triangle between two great highroads from St. Quentin and Roye, which converge and meet just outside Amiens. The immediate object of the German attack was to seize Bretonneux, which stands on a plateau whose

western slopes command the country and approaches to Amiens, the village of Cachy, and straighten the front for a renewed push towards Amiens. This was the lesser object. If the line had shown any signs of giving way there would have been every effort to improve the occasion. The preliminary bombardment against the selected sector of line was terrific, and five German divisions, including the 4th Guards, were allocated to the attack. About seven o'clock the infantry attacks began, and the British, under the pressure of the 4th Guard, gave way after a period of strenuous fighting, and the Germans forced their way into Villers-Bretonneux. The first attacks had been beaten off, but when the full force of the assault was felt the top of the line had wavered. Below the village the effect of this slight falling back was soon felt, and the Germans forced back the line to the neighbourhood of Cachy.

It was about this point that some five German tanks entered the battle, and proved that, despite their contemptuous reports of the British invention, the Germans were far from underrating the new weapon. The tanks were like large moving forts with turrets, and when these monsters were able to move round the south and west of the village, the position of the defenders became hopeless. By evening Villers-Bretonneux had been abandoned, and the Germans were in the outskirts of Hangard. But about ten o'clock the Australians and British made a vigorous and skilful counter-attack upon both sides of Villers-Bretonneux, and the fighting continued throughout the night. In the midst of the struggle two British tanks engaged a German tank squadron. One of the British tanks was disabled, but another came up, and after placing a German tank out of action, helped to fling back the German tank assault. The British movement was at length successful, and converging on the east of Villers-Bretonneux, cut off the Germans in the village. Heavy fighting went on in the streets for some time, and the Germans tried again and again to throw forward fresh reinforcements in order to relieve the pressure upon the force which had been cut off. The attempts were useless, as the men were mowed down by rifle- and machine-gun fire before they got to the heart of the struggle. By nightfall the village was again in British hands, and 1,000 prisoners had been taken, with some field guns, four trench mortars, and a number of machine guns. The Germans had claimed as many prisoners and four guns, so the honours on the whole battlefield were evenly divided. About the same time the French had also reacted at Hangard. The success again lay with the Allies, and at the end of the two days' fighting the lines were not much different from what they were at the beginning of the attack.

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It was about the time when the Allied counter-attack was beginning to yield a decisive success at Villers-Bretonneux that the battle was resumed in Flanders. Just after midnight the attack was heralded by a severe bombardment between Wytschaete and Bailleul. The objective was the hill of Kemmel, where French units stood in defence of the village and hill. Kemmel Hill is an isolated height, standing up above all the ground in its vicinity, and commanding the country to the north, and overlooking the main ridge. It was of the highest importance for attack or defence; but from its isolated position it could only be held securely while the ground on the east and south was also held. The battle in which the position was lost was one of the most severe struggles of the whole of the operations on the Lys. Some nine divisions of Eberhardt's and Sieger's corps were thrown in against about four of the British and French. For the attack on Kemmel itself Prussian and Bavarian troops were selected. The bombardment included a great proportion



of gas shells, and the hill and the surrounding neighbourhood was drenched in gas. For two hours the gas barrage had fallen upon the Allied lines when at four o'clock in the morning of the 25th the attack began. The hill itself, with its bare stumps of trees and shrubs, held the gas, and the French who defended the position fought in their gas-masks, as did also the gunners on the farther side of the hill. The French soldiers had been told that they were to die rather than retreat, and they followed out the spirit of this order. For hours the hill was so cut off that no one knew what had happened. A low-flying aeroplane diving below the guns saw Frenchmen still holding trench-holes late in the afternoon.

Five hours after the battle began the German troops had cut off the hill by a converging attack. The attack broke through to the east of Kemmel between the British and French units at Wytschaete, and to the west of the position cut through the French positions near Dranoutre. When the hill was cut off it had still to be stormed, and it was at least five hours before the Germans reached the summit. But at this point the new arm entered again, and airmen kept the Germans off the hill for hours after the last Frenchmen had ceased to fire. The cost of such a victory cannot but have been heavy. To the north of Kemmel the Royal Scots and Camerons, though surprised in the morning mists, held off the Germans until the troops on their right had withdrawn to Vierstraat and re-established contact with the French at La Clytte. On the 26th there was heavy fighting throughout the day. A counter-attack of the 25th Division with parts of the 21st and 49th Divisions with French troops recovered Kemmel village and took 500 prisoners, but they were unable to retain it owing to the machine-gun fire of the Germans. Later in the day the French brilliantly recaptured Locre.

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When the battle died down after this terrible struggle the position was very serious. At Kemmel the Germans could overlook the Ypres salient and observe all the communications that supplied it. The question which concerned most people was, could Ypres be held longer? but what concerned General Plumer was the shrinking area of his manœuvring room and the attempt to turn the ridge of hills and cut through to the coast. In effect the struggle had now become a question of relative exhaustion. The Germans had lost very heavily, and yet new divisions were constantly being flung into the attack. The gloom and depression in England were increasing, and speculations as to the loss of the Channel ports were to be found in the press. Yet a fortnight had passed since Sir Douglas Haig issued his grave Army Order to the troops. It was perhaps this more than anything else that had tended to convince people of the gravity of the issue. Fortunately, people's memories are short, or the subsequent course of events falling upon such a confession of weakness would have weakened people's *moral* more than it did. But can it be wondered if the Germans seemed to see the prize of victory within their grasp? If things were so grave on the third day of the attack, what must be the real position a fortnight later when the Germans were on Kemmel and had for a few hours forced their way on to the main ridge?

Under such a sequence of events the Germans reacted as might have been expected. For forty-eight hours they devoted themselves to reorganisation. The wearied troops were re-formed and regrouped. While Locre and Voormezele were the scene of violent local actions in which the places changed hands several times, the area showed no evidence of greater operations. But on the third day all was

ready for the decisive battle. Early in the morning of Monday, 29th April, there were ready thirteen divisions for the assault which was to cut through the thin crust of the defence to the rear of Ypres. The garrison of that much-contested salient was to be cut off, and the ridge of hills was to be turned from the north. Plumer, on the night of the 26th, had carried out yet another withdrawal, and it seemed that he could hardly fail to be cut off. On this occasion the "break through" was to be complete. The Channel ports glimmered faintly but encouragingly in the distance.

The bombardment in this attack ranged over a wide area. Before Lens, even on the Somme front, it rolled and thundered. In the shallow basin of the recent attack it was violent and almost continuous. There were spasmodic bursts of drum fire as though an attack were imminent, and in the early morning hours, after a night of such alarms and nerve-racked attention, the bombardment seemed to take on a redoubled fury. The French were still on the main ridge, and held a line to the rear of Dranoutre on the south, and to Vierstraat on the north. At five o'clock the assaults began to fall on the junction between the French and British. From thence it spread northward and southward. But the main attack was delivered on the sector between Meteren and St. Eloi. The direction of the thrust was almost due north. One column attempted to force its way past Voormezele along the western side of the canal to the rear of Ypres. Another aimed at pressing north-east to Poperinghe, and the fiercest attack aimed at securing a lodgment on the main ridge. A little before noon the Germans succeeded in penetrating to the cross-roads ("Hyde Park Corner") between Mont Rouge and the Scherpenberg on the main ridge, and even got on to the southern slopes of the latter peak. The village of Locre changed hands more than once, and in the early afternoon the position was serious. About five o'clock the French delivered a vigorous counter-attack which restored the situation at Hyde Park Corner; and a formal counter-attack in the early hours of the next morning not only restored Locre to the French, but even advanced the Allied positions almost a mile from where they had been at the beginning of the attack. On the left of the French the 25th, 21st, and 49th (West Riding) Divisions held the line throughout the day, and inflicted heavy losses upon the Germans as they advanced. And the Belgians, attacked along the Ypres-Staden Railway, yielded temporary gains which they recovered in immediate counter-attacks. When the French recoil came the British also advanced, and at the end of this terrific battle the Germans had lost instead of gaining ground, and had suffered extremely heavy casualties. At the beginning of the battle it seemed to the German Staff that a strategic success lay just within reach. A final push, and 1914 would return, and the Germans would be able to penetrate to the Channel coast. At the end of the battle it was clear that a mistake had been made. Opportunism becomes, at a certain point, a severe handicap, and this was the god of the hour.

With the failure on 29th April the battle died down. The failure was quite complete and unmistakable, and the German exhaustion would not permit of further efforts. The battle was logically part of the first act of the decisive campaign. For three whole weeks the struggle persisted, and it was on the seventeenth day that the great assault which secured Kemmel was delivered. The curtain was rung down on the first act. From first to last the great German assault had been almost continuous for six weeks, and a glance at the map shows how great successes they had won. Depression had grown upon the Allies more and more as



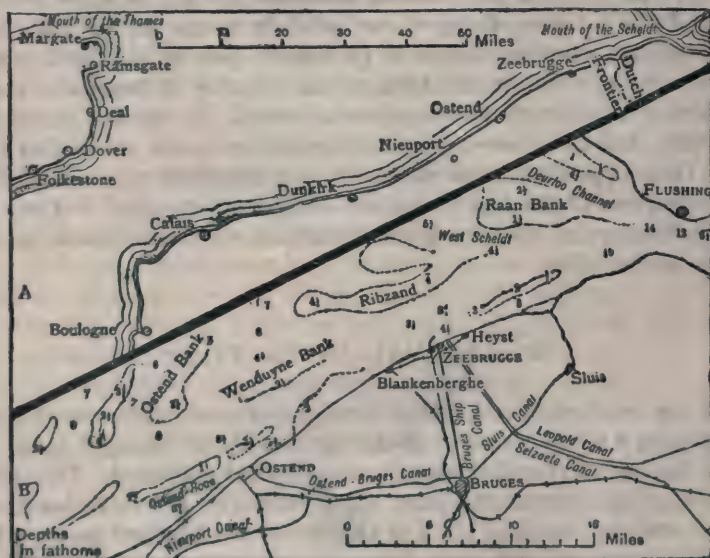
they saw the narrow foothold of the British across the Channel decreasing, after Amiens had been so nearly approached. Current criticism tended to point out the great disparity between the German and the Allied forces. The Germans, it is true, had engaged 150 divisions, and some of them more than once. But from first to last, in this great attempt to destroy the Allied force, the Germans had only engaged in the proportions of four to three. This is not the disparity which, according to the theories of Bloch and current expert opinion on both sides, would give even reasonable chances of success. And it must be said that Ludendorff had boldly put his faith in strategical and tactical superiority. The concealed concentration, the masked approach, and the superbly conducted tactics of infiltration were what he relied upon to give him decisive success. The Germans were superior to the British troops in the mechanism of war. Their assaulting columns of picked troops went forward with machine guns and mine-throwers. A gap anywhere was at once exploited, and the columns diverged methodically to the rear of the positions still standing. Reserves were summoned to profitable spots by signal rockets, and with the artillery running close on the heels of the infantry it became a matter of the utmost difficulty to bring the moving mass to a halt. In the first act of the decisive battle the Allies had not discovered the appropriate tactics to combat this method of attack. Their opposition came rather from indomitable courage than from skill. The higher direction of the Lys battle was competent enough; but in the end it is tactics which decide, and the mere game of warfare was better known to the German soldiers than to the Allies.

#### V. A NAVAL INTERLUDE.\*

MEANWHILE the most moving demonstration that British spirit was still indomitable had been given by a naval raid upon Zeebrugge and Ostend on 23rd April. The object was to close the harbours and render them useless to navigation. The opening of the Second Battle of the Somme had been accompanied by a bombardment of Dunkirk from the sea, and the Battle of the Lys threatened the Channel ports. It was therefore decided to block the two chief bases at present possessed by the Germans on the south of the Channel. The entrance to Zeebrugge, which is the sea terminus of the Bruges Canal, was narrow, and even the fairway at Ostend, the other Bruges Canal port, was not wide. The navy conceived the idea of blocking these channels by sinking in the middle of them a number of old cruisers full of concrete. The project sounds more simple than it was. The coast was highly fortified, and, apart from the loss which might be expected, there was the danger that the plan might be discovered prematurely and made impossible of achievement. The scheme was therefore most carefully thought out. A light covering force from the Dover and Harwich commands under Admiral Tyrwhitt acted as flank guard from the north. The attack proper was under the direction of Vice-Admiral Roger Keyes, commanding at Dover. His force was a strangely eclectic one, comprising British and French destroyers, the British under Captain Wilfred Tomkinson; six obsolete cruisers—the *Brilliant*, *Sirius*, *Intrepid*, *Iphigenia*, *Thetis*, and *Vindictive*; two ferryboats, which until shortly before had been plying on the river Mersey; monitors, motor launches, coastal motor boats, under Lieutenant A. P. Wellman, D.S.O., each with a crew of six,

\* Founded on the official narrative.

and other small craft. The first five of the old cruisers were filled with concrete to be sunk in the Channel. *Vindictive*, with the ferryboats *Daffodil* and *Iris*, carried storming parties which were to land on the sea side of the Mole which protected Zeebrugge from natural blocking by silted sand, and deal with the works thereon as a feint. The men on the cruisers and the storming parties were bluejackets and Royal Marines picked from a large number of volunteers from the Grand Fleet and from the naval and marine depots. It was their rôle to create a diversion by attacking the garrison on the Mole while the blocking ships steamed up the canal to the lock-gates. On the eve of St. George's Day the little force set out, sailing without lights and timing themselves to reach Zeebrugge by midnight. *Vindictive* had been provided with a high false deck, whence ran the eighteen brows or gangways by which the storming and demolition parties were to land. As the vessels approached Zee-



- A. Ostend, Zeebrugge, and the North Sea Coast from Dover Straits to the Scheldt.  
 B. Sea Approaches and Canal Connections of Ostend and Zeebrugge.

brugge a smoke screen was made by the smaller craft. But the capricious wind changed, blew it aside, and the plot was revealed. *Vindictive*, under Captain Carpenter, at once ran in and laid her port side to the Mole. The men were gathered in readiness on the main and lower decks, while Colonel Elliot, who was to lead the marines, waited on the false deck just abaft the bridge, and Captain H. C. Halahan, who commanded the bluejackets, was amidships.

The gangways were lowered, and scraped and rebounded upon the high parapet of the Mole as the *Vindictive* rolled, and the word for the assault had not yet been given, when both leaders were killed, Colonel Elliot by a shell and Captain Halahan by the machine-gun fire which swept the decks. The same shell that killed Colonel Elliot also did fearful execution in the forward Stokes mortar battery.

The mere landing on the Mole was a perilous venture. It involved a passage across the crashing, splintering gangways, a drop over the parapet into the field of



fire of the German machine guns, which swept its length, and a further drop of some sixteen feet to the surface of the Mole itself. Many were killed and more were wounded as they crowded up to the gangways; but nothing hindered the orderly and speedy landing by every gangway.

Lieutenant H. I. C. Walker had his arm carried away by a shell on the upper deck, and lay in the darkness while the storming parties trod him under. He was recognised and dragged aside by the commander. He raised his remaining arm in greeting. "Good luck to you," he called, as the rest of the stormers hastened by, "good luck."

The lower deck was a shambles as the commander made the rounds of his ship. Yet those wounded and dying raised themselves to cheer as he made his tour. The crew of the howitzer which was mounted forward had all been killed. A second crew was destroyed likewise; and then a third crew took over the gun. In the stern cabin a firework expert who had never been to sea before—one of Captain Brock's employees—was steadily firing great illuminating rockets out of a scuttle to show up the lighthouse on the end of the Mole to the block-ships and their escort.

*Daffodil*, after aiding to berth *Vindictive*, should have landed her own men; but the sea was pitching the cruiser about and her grapnels had not caught well on the Mole parapets, and hence *Daffodil* was ordered to stand by and help to keep *Vindictive* pressed in against the Mole. *Iris* also found trouble in making fast to the Mole. But two officers, Lieutenant-Commander Bradford and Lieutenant Hawkins, climbed ashore and sat astride the parapet trying to make the grapnels fast, till each was killed and fell down between the ship and the wall. Commander Valentine Gibbs had both legs shot away, and died next morning. Lieutenant Spencer, though wounded, took command, and refused to be relieved. *Iris* was obliged at last to change her position, and fall in astern of *Vindictive*, and suffered very heavily from the fire.

Meanwhile the storming and demolition parties from *Vindictive* had landed upon the Mole, where they met with no other resistance from the Germans than the intense and unrelenting fire. And, while they worked and destroyed, the covering party below the parapet could see in the harbour, by the light of the German star shells, the shapes of the block-ships stealing in and out of their own smoke and making for the mouth of the canal.

*Thetis* (Commander Sneyd) came first, steaming into a tornado of shell from the great batteries ashore. All her crew, save a remnant who remained to steam her in and sink her, had already been taken off by the ubiquitous motor launches; but the remnant spared hands enough to keep her four guns going. It was hers to show the road to *Intrepid* (Lieutenant Bonham-Carter) and *Iphigenia* (Lieutenant Billyard-Leake), who followed.

She cleared the string of armed barges which defended the channel from the tip of the Mole, but had the ill-fortune to foul one of her propellers upon the net defence which flanked it on the shore side. The propeller gathered in the net, and was rendered practically unmanageable. The shore batteries found her and pounded her unrelentingly; she bumped into a bank, edged off, and found herself in the channel again still some hundreds of yards from the mouth of the canal in a practically sinking condition. As she lay, she signalled invaluable directions to the others, and Commander S. Sneyd, D.S.O., accordingly blew the charges and sank her. A motor launch, under Lieutenant H. Littleton, raced alongside and took off her crew.

*Intrepid*, smoking like a volcano, and with all her guns blazing, followed. Her motor launch had failed to get alongside outside the harbour, and she had men enough for anything. Straight into the canal she steered, her smoke blowing back from her into *Iphigenia's* eyes, so that the latter, blinded and going a little wild, rammed a dredger, with a barge moored beside it, which lay at the western arm of the canal. She got clear, and entered the canal pushing the barge before her. It was then that a shell hit the steam connections of her whistle, and the escape of steam which followed drove off some of the smoke and showed up her course clearly.

Lieutenant Stuart Bonham-Carter placed the nose of his ship neatly on the mud of the western bank, ordered his crew away, and blew up his ship by the switches in the chart-room.

Lieutenant E. W. Billyard-Leake beached *Iphigenia* according to arrangement on the eastern side, let her drop across the canal, and left her with her engines still going to hold her in position till she should have bedded well down on the bottom.

From air observation it was later discovered that the two old ships, with their holds full of concrete, were lying across the canal in a V position, and the canal was effectively blocked.

There were some thrilling incidents in the escape of the crews of the cruisers. Lieutenant Bonham-Carter, having sent away his boats, was reduced to a Carley-float, an apparatus like an exaggerated lifebuoy with a floor or grating. Upon contact with the water it ignited a calcium flare, and he was adrift in the uncanny illumination, with a German machine gun, a few hundred yards away, giving him its undivided attention. What saved him was possibly the fact that the defunct *Intrepid* was still emitting huge clouds of smoke which no one had thought of turning off. He managed to catch a rope as the motor launch started, and was towed for a while till he was observed and taken on board.

Another officer jumped ashore, and ran along a bank to the launch. A bullet from the machine gun caught him as he ran, and when he arrived charging down the bank out of the dark he was received by a member of the launch's crew, who attacked him with a hammer.

The landing parties maintained their positions at the Mole for over an hour. They did not achieve all the objects that were set them, but they distracted the defence while the cruisers were stealing into the neck of the canal, and the two old submarines were finding their way to the piles which connected the Mole with the mainland. They were full of explosives, and there they were to be blown up; and the aircraft on the following day saw a great gap where they had done their work. As they exploded a huge roaring spurt of flame was seen that seemed to tear the jetty in half. The *Vindictive* was later towed away from the Mole by the *Daffodil*, a great black shape with funnels gapped and leaning out of the true, flying a vast streamer of flame as her stokers worked her up—almost a wreck—to a final display of seventeen knots. Her decks were a dazzle of sparks, her forward funnel was a sieve, but she brought back intact the horseshoe nailed to it which Sir Roger Keyes had presented to her commander.

The motor launches were busy during the engagement not only in supplying a curtain of smoke and in receiving the crews of vessels, but even in attacking the German craft. One of them sank a German torpedo boat alongside the jetty.

At Ostend things did not go so well. The wind that blew back the smoke screen at Zeebrugge served the adventurers even worse off Ostend, where that and nothing



else prevented the success of an operation ably directed by Commodore Hubert Lynes, C.M.G. The coastal motor boats had lit the approaches and the ends of the piers with calcium flares, and made a smoke cloud which, at first, hid them from the enemy. But the wind changed, the flares were seen, and the German gunners concentrated their fire on them and they were not long left to light the scene. *Sirius* was already in a sinking condition when at length she and *Brilliant*, having failed to find the entrance, grounded, and were forced, therefore, to sink themselves at a point about four hundred yards east of the piers, and their crews were taken off by motor launches. The motor launches here were under the command of Commander Hamilton Benn, D.S.O., M.P., while those at Zeebrugge were commanded by Captain R. Collins (the Vice-Admiral's flag captain).

But the operations had achieved a striking success against fortifications armed with at least 120 guns, and though the ships had not done all they set out to do, they had proved their mettle, and the moral results were very precious. The losses were heavy in comparison with the forces engaged; but in all they did not amount to 1,000, and the men came back as victors with the knowledge that their exploit would rank in history.

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A second attempt was made upon Ostend on the night of 9th May. Sir Roger Keyes, on *Warwick*, was again present; but the expedition was in charge of Commodore Hubert Lynes, as on 22nd April. On this occasion monitors and aeroplanes accompanied the force. A light buoy was laid by Lynes' destroyer; and a motor boat had hung a light flare in the rigging of the sunken *Sirius* when the block-ships steamed up. As they reached the mouth of the harbour two motor boats fired their torpedoes at the pier ends, the aeroplanes at once began to loose their bombs, and the monitors opened fire. On this occasion the smoke screen was reinforced by a sea fog, and the block-ships steamed about trying to find the mouth of the harbour. *Vindictive*, steering by a flare placed by a motor boat, got between the piers, but came under a terrible fire. She got to the eastern pier, but before she could complete the turn to block the channel a shell made her unmanageable, and she was sunk at an angle across the harbour mouth. In that position nothing but the smaller submarines could get in or out; and when the flotilla left it had achieved the greater part of its purpose.

These stirring deeds served to lighten the dark days of the spring. The project had been suggested by Jellicoe in 1914, but had been discouraged. Since then the Battle of Jutland had been fought and won, and the spirit of the German navy had fled. About this time the German seamen mutinied, and though the mutiny was put down with a stern hand the ill-feeling smouldered. But the spirit of the British navy gleamed as brightly as ever, and the names of Zeebrugge and Ostend deserve to rank among the most honourable in its history.

## VI. THE THIRD BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

AFTER the decisive defeat of the Germans north of Kemmel, there was a lull on the Western front. No one paid much attention to the brilliant advance of General Marshall in Mesopotamia or the manœuvres of Allenby in Palestine. Nor did the

skirmishing in the Lys area, with the skilful little advance at Locre, or the Australians' exploit on the Ancre, and the Italians' attack on the Tonale Pass distract attention from the Allies' painful preoccupation with the narrowness of their manœuvring room before Amiens and before Calais. Impatient critics asked why Foch did nothing, and the critics of the unified command seemed to see themselves justified. Even in Germany the pause was resented. The first act of the decisive campaign had lasted for six weeks, and though it seemed ever on the point of yielding decisive success it failed to do so.

The treaty of peace with Rumania was signed on 7th May without producing undue elation in the Central Empires, and without attracting much attention among the Allied peoples. The treaty was merely a sort of enslavement of Rumania ; but the fact that it was not a complete enslavement was its most remarkable feature. In the circumstances, Rumania lay at the feet of the Central Empires. They could do with her as they would, and the fact that the country was not simply annexed shows some glimmerings of statecraft in the German ruling party. Rumania was to be in effect a federal state of the Empire with her dynasty left untouched, and very probably with actual German support for it if it were in danger. Despite the harshness of the terms of peace the dynasty was left alone, and the people were not subject to military service. But, weakened, reduced, humiliated, it was left to form one of that group of weak States surrounding the Central Empires which should give all the realities of the domination Germany wished, though without its signs, and without the disaffection which intolerable terms might have left.

But neither this nor any other event served to fill the minds of the peoples of the warring nations who looked for the next act. The Germans saw that another act was needed. The first was meant to be decisive, and it had not been. The second must decide. The Allies looked more anxiously, steeling themselves against the possible crises that would have to be faced. No one had any doubt that there would be another great blow ; and though the military demands of the situation were clear enough, no one could tell where it would fall. The advance westward to Montdidier had left a long flank gravely threatened by the French positions on the Chemin des Dames, which had been thoroughly mastered at the end of the preceding October. The Aisne positions had always looked threateningly towards Laon ; and though the Germans did not underrate the difficulty of an advance by the French upon Laon, the effects of such an attack, if it could be carried out, now that Hutier lay as far west as Montdidier, would have been most grave. It was necessary to clear this flank if the advance westward upon Amiens were to be continued, and the action which began on 27th May was thus an offensive-defensive operation, though, with their present opportunities, the German Staff were ready to exploit any chance that might offer. The position was tempting for another reason. On these positions were at present some tired divisions, hard tried in the recent battle. They had been sent there to rest and recover their nerve. Some of them, too, were British divisions, and this again was an inducement to attack. To place divisions of one nationality among those of another which are differently trained, use different food and different munitions, is a dangerous experiment. Under great stress the lines of communication may become confused and the organism break down from inanition. And, again, troops engaged in a new and unfamiliar area are not likely to know their terrain for some time, and, if attacked, they cannot fall back with that spontaneous



skill possessed by troops which are conversant with the roads and the nature of the country.

The antecedents of the attack were the same as those which preceded the great assault on 21st March. The troops were secretly concentrated and the approach skilfully masked. In all, General von Boehn's 7th Army and General (Fritz) von Below's 1st Army mustered twenty-five divisions for attack, with fifteen in reserve. Three of the divisions were Guard troops, who had taken a good share of the original fighting which opened the decisive campaign. On the morning of 27th May, just after midnight, a violent bombardment with gas shells was delivered on the front between Vauxillon and Reims. The right part of this sector was held by the British 50th, 8th, and 21st Divisions, with the 25th just behind the 50th, about Craonne, in close support. On their left four French divisions of General Maistre's 6th Army held the line of the Chemin des Dames. The assault began about 4.40 o'clock and achieved a complete surprise. As far as Berry-au-Bac Boehn's 7th Army held the line from the left of Hutier (at the mouth of the Ailette), with Below's army between Berry-au-Bac and Auberive, in Champagne. The infantry attack began with a massed assault of Conta's troops from Corbeny along the road to Craonne and Craonnelle. The position was difficult to hold, though the reverse of the Aisne heights had been held with great success against the French assault in April 1917. But against the new German tactics of infiltration it was difficult to maintain positions on a ridge which is only a few hundred yards across in places, and scarcely more than a thousand yards anywhere. In every attack some ground is bound to be lost; but in dealing with the new German tactics the problem was how to check the momentum of the attack, if it once got really started. Where could the reserves be put in? Any place which it seemed necessary to hold might be overrun under the impetus of the assault before the reserves were established. These considerations have their point from the events of the battle. The left of the British sector about Craonne was held by the 50th and 25th Divisions, units composed of troops who had borne the heavy strain of fighting in both the Somme area and about the Lys, and when the German attack fell upon their point of junction with the French they found their positions turned. Winckler's and Conta's corps forced their way in heavy fighting across the Chemin des Dames, and there was nothing to be done but to fall back, pivoting on the 5th French Army, which held its ground despite all assaults. The French left above Soissons similarly held its ground; but between these two points the Allied troops had no chance but to fall back as the Germans got round their flank. Larisch with Wichura on his right struck down the Laffaux road and turned the Chemin des Dames from the west, and by noon the Germans were on the Aisne from Chavonne to Berry.

Between Soissons and Reims the front measured some twenty-five miles, and the breach effected in it could not have been less than ten miles in extent on the first day. And the German troops with the greatest skill and persistence pushed forward across the Aisne by means of the French bridges, not destroyed in the rapid falling back, and by nightfall were on the Vesle and beginning to cross between Bazoches and Magneux. These troops had marched some twelve miles, beating down all resistance. To appreciate this astounding achievement, which surpassed any of the German troops on the West since the beginning of the war, it must be remembered that, although the 50th (Northumberland) Territorial Division had to stand the on-

slaught of probably four times its number, in gas masks, it had made a courageous counter-attack at Craonne early in the battle, and had only been beaten by the German tanks, which were used in great numbers. On the right the 21st Division, assisted by some battalions of the 25th, held fast with the French before Reims, and at the end of the day their positions were almost intact. Only north of Brimont were Below's troops able to push the Allies across the Aisne-Marne Canal. On the left the French held to their positions about Vauxillon and Vregny. But the Aisne had been crossed between Vailly and Pont Arcy early in the afternoon. At the end



The German Advance to the Marne (May 27-30, 1918).

of the day the Germans claimed 15,000 prisoners. They had also captured much material. The attack had proved a complete surprise, and the result was decided in a few hours. There was no serious attempt to take up secondary positions, and the British and French lost touch. In some places mixed bodies of men stood valiantly in an attempt to stem the flood—but to no purpose. A battle by mixed British and French units was fought in Germicourt Wood, but it was merely an heroic incident. The same must be said of the engagement fought by a British cyclist corps at Fismes, on the Vesle. Such haphazard little exploits appeal more to the spirit of gallantry



and chivalry. But they are not war. The Germans knew their trade, and pushed on to exploit their momentum while it lasted. With one of the Guard regiments which reached the Aisne marched Prince Eitel Fritz, one of the Hohenzollern princes, and after the battle wave followed Hindenburg and the Kaiser to throw a little limelight on the scene. But even shorn of these theatrical properties, the scene was sufficiently striking. The success was greater than had been expected ; and at once Ludendorff made up his mind to give Boehn his head.

The German tactics at present used were to form a spearhead and to thrust it home. The alignment of the battle front at the end of the first day was of that form. The flanges of the spear rested about Soissons and Reims, and the point at Fismes on the Vesle. Throughout the night attempts were made to ease the flank at Soissons and Reims. The latter now lay straitly beset by the Germans. The British and French were there fighting against attacks from three directions. Cavalry were riding with field artillery across the plateau of the Tardenois. But by Tuesday evening the Germans were not only in the eastern suburbs of Soissons, but had also crossed the Vesle on a fairly broad front and established themselves on the heights to the south. The following day the Germans had made a long stride forward. The two pivots about Soissons and Reims still held ; but between them the Germans were fighting at Fère-en-Tardenois, where the advanced French base had been at the beginning of the battle. Soissons itself fell to the Brandenburg Grenadiers on Wednesday night (29th) after fierce street fighting ; but without a wide easement westward the city itself was of no value. The vast tangle of communications that centred in it could not be used until the French were driven well away to the west. But on Wednesday night the position was serious for the Allies. For two days their reserves had been thrown in lavishly without any effect beyond checking the advance slightly. In these three days the First Division of the Prussian Guard engaged seven divisions of the French in succession. The French troops were of necessity thrown in the way hurriedly ; and the Guard, once in their stride, and with their course mapped out, went through them all. There were other disquieting features. The Germans had secured a local supremacy in the air, and the roads to the rear of the Allies were incessantly bombed. For such an advance the claim of 35,000 prisoners was only moderate ; and the capture of all sorts of material, food, rolling stock, guns of all sorts, even the heaviest, and munitions, was immense. On Wednesday night the Germans had pushed out their line in a big semicircle from the Aisne-Marne Canal below Brimont (due north of Reims) to Soissons.

On the fourth day of the attack the Germans reached the Marne. The roads towards Paris and south of the Marne were now full of refugees carrying a few belongings and dragging their children with them. By this time forty divisions had been identified on the German side, and the tide was welling westward. An attack north-west of Soissons had pushed the line along the Ailette towards Noyon ; and the most bitter fighting was directed due west across the Château-Thierry road. It was only common prudence of von Boehn to look to his open flank. Foch had prepared a counter-attack from this direction, and if Soissons could have held a day longer it is possible the Germans might have met with a serious reverse. But the moment passed. The northern bank of the Marne was seized and held for some ten miles west of Dormans. On Thursday afternoon (30th) it was thought by the military authorities in London that Reims had fallen ; but, thanks to the heroic defence, the city was held against every threat, and it is difficult to overrate the

strategic consequences of this successful stand. There were some attempts to extend the battle east of Reims, but no success was gained there. The chief development upon this day was the turning to the west across the Soissons-Château-Thierry road. Such an advance appeared to suggest that the enemy intended to develop his operations in the direction of Paris. Hardly an attempt was made to cross the Marne. Château-Thierry was not captured until Sunday, but the struggle to push westward across the Soissons-Château-Thierry road had by that time been successfully and vigorously pressed for three days. It was about this time that the impetus began to fall out of the attack. It was comparatively easy for Foch to strike westward. His reserves were readily available in the area between the Oise and the Ourcq, and the bastion of forest land the Germans were approaching offered a good place for focusing the resistance. Speculation now credited the Germans with the object of advancing upon Paris, and the point of their thrust certainly was directed thither. But as the Crown Prince had used over fifty divisions, and his troops were approaching exhaustion, there was never any serious threat to the capital. On Saturday, Sunday, and Monday serious attempts were made to cross the Marne; but the Germans were heavily punished. A small detachment which succeeded in crossing the river about Jaulgonne, where there is a sharp loop, were hurled back after suffering heavy losses. There can be no doubt that the Germans intended to cross the river and push southwards. Their direction of thrust had been diverted by Foch's threat to their right flank, and it was no wiser to stand on the north bank of the Marne than to leave the right flank unguarded. A river line cannot be securely held unless both banks are held. Every general who wishes to hold a river line, therefore, at least attempts to establish bridgeheads across it. Von Boehn had been forced to accept Foch's control from the fourth day of the battle.

When the Germans captured Château-Thierry on Saturday night, they at once marched across the old stone bridge left intact for the purpose. About a battalion was allowed across before the French exploded the mines. There was a strong column on the bridge at the time, and other troops were crossing a pontoon bridge which the Germans had rapidly flung across the river. The Franco-American troops had then to cope with the Germans already across, and with the columns which were hastening over the pontoons. The Americans at once proved their mettle. Their machine guns soon made an end of the detachments across the river, and they also wrought great havoc with the men who were passing across the pontoons. Their skill and dash, and these alone, checked the first decided attempt to cross the Marne. On Monday, 3rd June, the second attempt was made at Jaulgonne. The northward loop of the river there, and the higher ground on the northern side, offered definite advantages to the Germans. Twenty-two light bridges were flung across from the north side, and a German battalion pressed across rapidly. They poured into the river bend, and attempted very skilfully to establish a bridgehead. The French troops were not numerous on the southern side, and the cavalry at first attempted to rush the German post, but were held off by machine guns. A company of French infantry attempted to turn the position from the east, but fared no better. But again an American machine-gun company turned the tide, covered the French infantry for another attempt, and the German position melted away. About one hundred men surrendered. One or two detachments escaped to the north bank in boats; the rest were killed: and the second attempt to cross the Marne had failed.



The great battle had sunk to a slower rhythm, but it had not yet altogether died down. On Sunday the Germans developed their position westward. The hill (204) which dominates Château-Thierry had been taken, and they had pushed the French and American troops outwards and towards the south-west from the Soissons-Château-Thierry road. They had crossed the Clignon valley, and had advanced past Torcy to Neuilly-la-Poterie. They had covered this extension towards the north by pressing forwards toward Villers-Cotterets, and by clearing the French from the positions west of Soissons which overlook its roads and railways. Farther north, the pressure below Noyon was only just supportable on Monday; but the day marked that strange equilibrising period when forces, despite tension, seem to achieve no result, though on the morrow the beam may go down on either side. On Tuesday the German effort was exhausted, and on the following day the French counter-attacks began to get home. Wednesday and Thursday gave Bligny into the hands of the British once more.

**Château-Thierry.**—About the same time French and American troops struck up at the centre of the German front between Château-Thierry and the Ourcq. The Americans had already fought a brilliant little action at Cantigny, when they were sent south to check the advance towards the west. The marines, who arrived first, soon proved their mettle, and, as more troops arrived, they extended their front from Belleau Wood to Jaulgonne. In this battle they fought with a concentrated fury that surprised the Allies as much as the Germans, and left their mark on the fortunes of the war. With the French on their left, they steadily pushed the enemy back, and captured the hill (204) above Château-Thierry. The advance made slow headway on Saturday, 8th June, but in the morning a new battle opened, and turned all thoughts to another area.

Looking at the Third Battle of the Aisne critically we can see that it achieved great results at a little cost, and yet failed to achieve the one result that mattered. The Germans, at the end, had engaged fewer troops than the Allies, and they had succeeded by skill against a more numerous enemy. It was indeed a soldier's battle, and Boehn did almost all that any one could have expected of him. He had got to the Marne in record time, had seized immense stores of war material, and a great number of prisoners. He had gone forward with the highest speed and decision while he had liberty of action, and he had turned with lightning rapidity and a splendid renunciation of natural hopes when he saw the threat to his open flank. His conduct of the battle was admirable. But the same cannot be said of the supreme command. Opportunist as he was, Ludendorff could not revise all his plans on the instant; but if he had put in a few more army corps to force the Marne crossings, all that he hoped for might have been achieved. He might have turned the Reims position, and have thrust out the line below Villers-Cotterets forest, and have pushed on towards Paris. But for that resolution he called on himself in vain. It is on these conclusions rests final victory. But he determined rather to strike another blow elsewhere. What he hoped to achieve by that blow would have been achieved, with more besides, if he had but had the courage of his folly and had played for the highest stakes.

**The Battle of Compiègne.**—All who regarded the Third Battle of the Aisne as ending upon the days of the second week of June, realised that these great hammer blows, by which Hindenburg was striving to smash the Allied armies to bits, were gradually narrowing down the problem of the defence by leaving upon the map



The German Attempt in June to advance on the Montdidier-Soissons Front.



the clear evidence of where the next attempts must fall. Every one could see, for instance, that a further extension of the battle towards Paris must demand some attention to the Champagne front and the Reims position. Each German solution left another problem behind it, and an even more insistent problem than the reduction of Reims was the reduction of the new salient produced in the sector of the line which ran between Montdidier and the Oise. The great railway artery which supplied the eastern flank of the French line, and all the positions in Champagne, had been interrupted by the advance to the Marne, along whose southern bank it ran. Established along some ten or twelve miles of the northern bank, the Germans could shell the line at their pleasure from close range; and from this success they had already weakened, at least temporarily, the power of the Allies to threaten them from that quarter. It was otherwise with the sector between Montdidier and the Oise, which the recent successes had turned into a salient. It lay, while intact, like a spearhead thrust against the side, pointing at and threatening the German positions. Some part of its strength had gone in the extension of the German attack westwards toward the Oise; but across the river the positions still lay secure, and they were well supplied and well supported by an elaborate system of communications. And the sector not only pressed into the German front of advance, constricting and hampering further plans; it covered, moreover, one of the great centres of communication for the area from Montdidier to the forest of Villers-Cotterets. A great double-line railway, the main line from Paris, ran through it to Noyon and La Fère. Another double track ran to Soissons. There were single tracks by Ressons-sur-Matz to Roye, by Estrées St. Denis to Montdidier and to the town of Villers-Cotterets.

These five lines acted as the trunk on which were grafted all that intricate system of railway tracks that modern warfare needs. Compiègne taken, the whole of this area would suffer, and the line would reel under the shock. And, of course, by Compiègne and the Oise valley lay the shortest way to the capital, Paris, some thirty-eight miles to the south-west. It required no eagle eye to see that Compiègne was an irresistible lure. It lies at the junction of the Oise and the Aisne, and the Germans had already beaten back the French front towards the Oise, so that the line rested on the woods east of the Oise, making a rough equilateral triangle with the Aisne. West of the Oise, the Allied line ran almost due west from just below Noyon to Montdidier, for the most part south of the Montdidier-Noyon railway, but for a few miles north of it. This stretch of line is cut roughly in halves by the Matz stream, which runs in a valley some one hundred and fifty to one hundred and sixty feet below, and west of, the hilly land known as the Lassigny heights, two hundred and fifty feet higher. The eastern half of the line, lying in front of the wooded hills, was the more difficult to capture. The hills lay west of the Oise, in front of Compiègne, as Carlepont and Ourscamp Woods did on the east of the Oise. West of the Matz stream the country was more open.

The soldier, reviewing this stretch of ground, must have realised that the eastern sector would be almost invulnerable to direct attack, and yet it was precisely this sector which required to be forced. Surprise, in its full sense, could not be expected for an attack there, since it was so obviously the German interest to get to Compiègne. So when the heavy gas-shell bombardment opened against the positions, just after midnight on Sunday, 9th June, the French were prepared. For some days previously the Germans had made little attempt to conceal their preparations, and they

were observed with interest to be registering with great persistence, and the bombardment, when it came, was extremely violent. The French at once began to put up a barrage, and the counter-battery work must have wrought great havoc. When attack was imminent, the Germans were brought forward and densely echeloned near the front, and a heavy shelling in such positions must take its toll of the packed trenches. This fact was verified later, for the French guns were then seen to have caused heavy losses. The front of the attack was twenty-two miles in length, and over half this distance the Germans did not succeed in crossing the covering zone. They were met with the most determined resistance, and when, at the end of the day, they lay along a line from Rubescourt to Mortemer, they had paid extremely heavily for an advance which every one expected in a resolute attack, without regarding it as encouraging or disquieting. From the Matz westward the resistance was also solid and could be even less broken down. The Germans could not get farther than the southern slopes of the wooded heights; and if this had been the whole of the story, the battle would have been written off as an expensive defeat.

But in between these two sectors lay the valley of the Matz, running almost due north and south at first, and then turning to the south-east to join the Oise below Ribecourt, some six miles from Compiègne. Along this valley the Germans had directed the full force of their thrust. They saw with sure instinct that if the valley could be threaded the hill country which lay in the curve between it and the Oise would be turned. By the end of the day the Germans had captured Ressons-sur-Matz, where the stream begins to turn south-eastward, and Mareuil. Despite the staunch resistance on the sectors west and east, this success had given the Germans the leverage for their next move. It was not all they had proposed themselves in the first day of the attack. But what of this. Troops are supplied with orders sufficiently ambitious to cover the most incredible success. On Monday (10th) the battle raged the whole day without ceasing, but the formation of the country had tended to break it up into small detached fights. On the left again the resistance was effective. Courcelles changed hands several times, and on the east also the positions were held. In the afternoon the little village of Le Plemont, north of Thiescourt Wood, in the original line, was still holding out. But the wedge in the centre was being driven farther in. The troops who had threaded the Matz valley turned west and east; and, while the garrison of Le Plemont was still holding out, the captors of Mareuil were entering Thiescourt Wood, three miles to the south. The fighting was fierce, and wholly unlike those abortive engagements in the Third Battle of the Aisne. Every foot was paid for in blood, and when, at nightfall on the second day, the enemy began to draw the interest on their first day's investment by marching towards Ribecourt on the Oise and reaching the Aronde stream farther west, the situation undoubtedly looked serious.

By their advance upon Ribecourt the Germans had, in effect, outflanked Carlepont and Ourscamp Woods east of the Oise, and these positions had to be evacuated. Their loss very considerably depreciated the bulwark of Compiègne. Yet Ribecourt had been in the French front line until March 1917, and when it passed to the German front line the situation was not gravely weakened, except that now the Germans were on the outskirts of the Villers-Cotterets forest below. On Tuesday (11th) the battle was continued with undiminished violence, the centre pressing forward in the endeavour to reach the Aronde. On the right, the chief gain was Melicocq, near the mouth of the Matz. It was not a great advantage; and on the afternoon of this



day the German attack had so far spent itself that the French began a counter-movement. On the left of the threatened sector the French infantry, supported by tanks, counter-attacked between Rubescourt and St. Maur. The reaction was considerable. Part of the former positions were recovered with great rapidity. More than one thousand prisoners were taken. Belloy Wood was retaken, and the outskirts of St. Maur were entered. The counter-attack was extended to the centre and right, and continued during the following day.

By the 14th, the sixth day since the beginning of the battle, the struggle had died down. The Germans had never been near Compiègne; and there is evidence that the city was regarded merely as a stepping-stone. In the end the line ran just south of Ribecourt, though above the Matz, across the stream to the southern fringes of the Ressons Wood, through Belloy, west of Courcelles, and so to the original line about Montdidier. East of the Oise, the line had been withdrawn to cover the forest of Laigue. The captured ground at its maximum depth at the Ressons Wood was no deeper than five miles; and comparing such a gain with that of the recently ended advance across the Aisne, it seems almost too small to reckon. Indeed, it was hard to grasp that a great battle on a front of over twenty miles was being fought. The measures of the fighting reverted to those of the preceding year, and this fact showed that, short of surprise, the Germans were unable to achieve more than the Allies had achieved in the preceding years. Success depended, not only upon their tactics of infiltration, clever as these undoubtedly were, but also upon such tactics launched with the initial advantages of surprise. The new German battle machine was designed for speed, but unless it could get going at once, it tended to be as inert as all other expedients in positional warfare.

**Reims.**—On 18th June the Germans attempted to carry out the other necessary readjustments in their lines by a vigorous attack from three sides upon Reims. About three divisions were thrown into this assault, and its only hope of success was that the city might fall by a *coup de main*. The attack was beaten off with great loss, and the Reims *massif* remained as another thorn in the German side. They had not wholly removed the threat from Montdidier to the Oise by their attack on 9th June; but surveying the positions gained in three months of warfare, in a theatre apparently given over to trifling advances, the German Staff may well have felt content with their chances. Still, the battle of the Matz masked a certain change in the rhythm of success, and when it ended the guns had already finished their preparation for a battle which was to mark a still greater change.

## VII. THE BATTLE OF THE PIAVE.

DURING the winter the combatants had ranged themselves, as we have seen, for a life-and-death struggle. Despite the attempts of Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Wilson, and the German moderates, Ludendorff and Clemenceau determined the last phase of the war. Mr. Wilson, towards the end, endeavoured to find a middle course in the detachment of Austria; but for the rest of the Allies this was an impossible expedient, since in effect they were pledged to the dismemberment of the Dual Monarchy. In the Pact of Corfu, published on July 20, 1917, a new State was proclaimed which should unite the Croats and Slovenes of Austria-Hungary with

the Serbs in a Yugo-Slav unity. This movement met with immediate sympathy in Italy, and it was only the great Italian defeat at Caporetto which postponed a Congress in which the subject-races of Austria-Hungary should seek a *rapprochement* with Italy. The Congress of the Oppressed Nationalities of Austria-Hungary was at length held in the Capitol in Rome in April 1918, and an agreement was reached between them and Italy which put an end to all further hope of detaching Austria-Hungary except by its complete disruption.

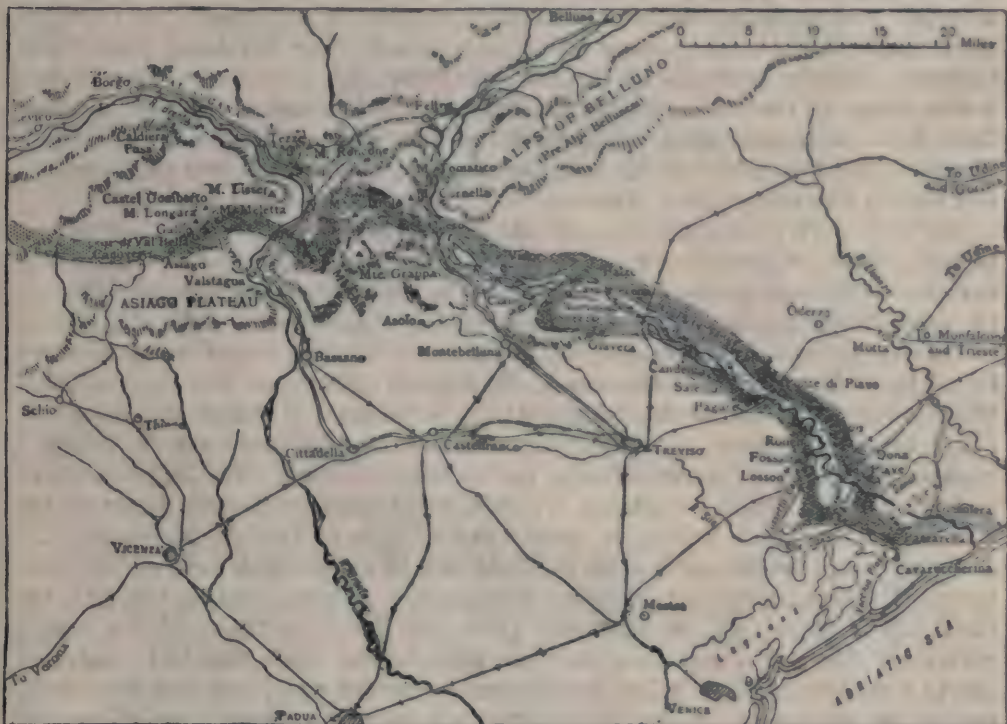
Austria-Hungary struggled through the spring with weariness, hunger, and disintegration staring her in the face, kept in the Germanic Alliance solely by the hopes of Ludendorff's victory. German troops were promised to assist in an offensive in Italy; but as the months wore on it became obvious that no such help could be given, and Austria was even urged to attack to assist the task of the Germans. The Italians, as we have already seen, had made a wonderful recovery after their defeat at Caporetto, and in the local actions of the beginning of the year they had had much the better of the exchanges. They had been heartened by one daring exploit in which two Italian motor boats had attacked a formidable Austrian squadron, sinking the battleship *Svent Istvan* and damaging one or two other vessels. A constant trickle of deserters gave to the Italian command invaluable information as to the coming attack, and Diaz knew the day, the hour, and the general plan. It was, therefore, without perturbation that he set himself on 13th June to cope with an attack about the Tonale Pass, which faces towards the Swiss frontier. The attack was checked at the front lines, and the original positions were regained in an energetic counter-attack. This was not part of the Austrian plan, as Diaz knew, but merely a feint.

The main attack was planned to begin about 7 A.M. on 15th July, and the heavy bombardment which began on the 14th, and rumbled over the whole of the line between the Adige and the sea, was borne with equanimity. Soon after midnight, however, the Italian guns began to reply; and with a skilfully directed fire on the front and rear positions, on points of concentration, and on the Austrian batteries, the Italians took a good deal of the heart out of the attack. At about 3 A.M. the special Austrian preparation began, using a great concentration of gas shells, and searching out the rear areas to a considerable depth. Four hours later the infantry assaults began at the scheduled time. Boroevitch was in supreme command of the offensive, and Hötendorff was placed in charge of the operations astride the Brenta. Krobatin acted under his orders between the Brenta and the Piave. On the Piave front were the army of the Archduke Joseph and Wenzel von Wurm's Isonzo army. The Austrian Staff had caught the opportunism of Ludendorff; but the plan was to cut down across the now thin rim of hill country between the Astico and the Piave, while the Piave armies crossed the river; and the two thrusts would thus compel the Italians to abandon the Venetian plain under threat of a disaster worse than that of Caporetto.

When daylight broke on the 15th, a thin mist, touching all the foreground with vagueness, lay over the mountains and the river. On the northern front the Austrians attacked over the twenty miles between the Astico and Monte Grappa. The British and French troops now lay south of Asiago on the west of the Brenta. In the first shock, the enemy achieved considerable gains. The 23rd British Division inflicted heavy loss on the attackers, but the 48th on its left lost the outpost divisions and was driven back for one thousand yards on a front of three thousand yards.



The Austrians attacked up the valley through which the Schio Railway threads its way; and though they overran the first British positions, the defenders checked the advance, and some of the troops who had been cut off took the assailants in the rear. The French also gave ground a little at Monte di Val Bella, and Costalunga was lost. Farther east, the Rosso salient was rapidly overrun, and the Austrians worked round Monte Melago, and penetrated to within one and a half miles of Valstagna. But north of this town the Alpini stood firm against every assault, though they lost heavily. East of the Brenta, Krobatin's army rapidly forced the western plateau of the Grappa *massif*, and reached Col Moschin, which is on the last fringe of the hill country. The struggle here for the last defences of the plain



The Final Battle for the Line of the Piave (June 15-24, 1918), showing the front held by the Austrians before the battle and their temporary gains of ground.

became most bitter, but the Austrians could not develop their first successes. The troops on the northern front speedily reacted. Costalunga and Col Moschin were recaptured before nightfall, and on the following day the 48th Division neatly cut off the salient driven into their positions, and with the French advanced, the British alone taking one thousand prisoners. For another day the struggle about the head and left flank of Val Frenzela raged fiercely; but at nightfall the battle on this front was over. None of its objectives had been approached, the losses had been extremely severe, and, with the defenders reacting so vigorously, Boroevitch determined to abandon the attack. What lay behind that decision we cannot yet say. There were still ample reserves, and the Austrians were in sight of the plain.

Meanwhile the armies on the Piave front had achieved significant successes.

The objective of the Archduke Joseph was the Montello, an isolated plateau which lies in a bend of the Piave and acted "as a hinge to the whole Italian line, joining as it does that portion facing north from Monte Tomba to Lake Garda, with the defensive line of the river Piave." \* It stands, at its highest, some 800 feet above the plain, some eight miles long by three broad, and is crossed by numerous roads from north to south. Under cover of a skilful smoke screen the Austrians crossed the river at Falze di Piave, on the north-east of Montello, and at Nervesa on the south-east; and the two columns by the end of the day had joined hands and established themselves across the north-east corner of the *massif*. During the next two days the Archduke's troops gradually extended their hold westward and southward, and on the 17th were in possession of two-thirds of the feature. That night vigorous attempts were made to drive the Italians off the plateau altogether; but the high-water mark of their achievement had been reached. The 8th Army then began to react. On the afternoon of the 18th the Piave began to rise, and its swollen waters swept off the banks the logs piled there by Italian lumbermen and, carrying them down with irresistible force, swept the bulk of the Austrian bridges away. The following day a further advance was made by the Italians, and the Austrians had now to face the problem of escape.

Farther south on the Piave the battle showed greater vicissitudes, and at one time the position looked very serious for the Italians. The smoke screen which covered the crossing north-east and south-east of the Montello enabled the Austrians to cross at several other places. At Grave di Papadopoli, where there is an island in the river, a crossing was made early in the day; but an energetic counter-attack forced back the Austrians to the island. At Fagare, Zenson, and San Dona di Piave Wurm's troops were more successful. At the latter place a bridgehead was established between Fossalta and Capo Sile, and the troops forced their way, despite vigorous and repeated counter-attacks, to the Fossalta Canal. The Italian artillery and Italian and British aeroplanes maintained a continuous bombardment of the bridges and the roads leading to them; but in spite of this the Hungarian and Austrian troops continued to cross the river and to extend their hold on the right bank. The first bridgehead at Zenson was speedily extended, and by the 17th, the third day of the attack, between that place and Folina to the north the enemy were more than half a mile from the river, while farther south they had penetrated nearly five miles. About 10,000 troops were across the river, and they were being constantly reinforced. A heavy counter-attack on the southern part of the line was checked, and the condition of the Piave front began to look serious. The Austrians succeeded in crossing the Fossalta Canal near the place where it cuts the railway, and reached Losson.

But Diaz was rapidly bringing up reinforcements, and on the following day the 4th Army pierced the Austrian centre and cut through to the river below Folina, advanced on Zenson, and pressed the enemy back between the Sile and the Piave. It was on this day that the river rose and the fortunes of the battle completely changed. The Italians had checked the Austrians already; now they began to counter-attack in force. On the 19th they had compelled them to abandon half their hard-won gains between the Piave and the Sile; and the Austrian generals, with three-quarters of their bridges cut by the river, began to be anxious for their communications. The Italian pressure continued. A heavy counter-attack at Losson on the 21st



failed to stay their advance, and a small force of sailors and soldiers threaded the marshy area at the mouth of the Piave, crossed the Piave Vecchia, and from Cavazuccherina threatened to strike at the rear of the Austrians to the north. Boroévitch realised that he had shot his bolt. The Austrian advance had been decisively checked everywhere, and their initial gains had been largely wrested from them. On the 22nd he gave the order to retire. The capricious waters, which had already played an important part in Italian battles, fell as suddenly as they had risen, and the Austrians were able to fall back in good order and without heavy loss. On the following day Diaz ordered a general attack. The 8th Army crossed the river at Falze di Piave and Nervesa, and after establishing bridgeheads sent out cavalry patrols. At the same time the 3rd Army crossed on its sector. But the advance was not directed with much vigour or skill. By the afternoon of the 24th the whole of the western bank of the river above the Sile Canal was once more in Italian hands, and the Austrians were compelled to abandon much of the territory between the Old and New Piave, a readjustment which put Venice out of range of their guns. The battle was over. It had been a costly failure for the Austrians. They had lost in prisoners alone 23,000 officers and men, and their total casualties must have been nearly 150,000 as against the 90,000 of the Italians.

There was some fighting for another ten days. Monte di Val Bella was recovered on the 29th, and Col del Rosso on the following day. The reaction in the region west of Grappa continued a few days longer, but by the second day of July the old positions in that sector were almost completely restored. In the Piave delta they were definitely better. If the Italian counter-offensive had been conducted with half the resolution and vigour which was shown in the defence, it is possible that Austria would have been driven from the ranks of the Allies' enemies at once. But it was her last attempt, and very soon the Germans were to fare similarly on the Western front.

## VIII. THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

"It was the first great disaster, and the real turning-point of the war."—[Colonel BAUER, Ludendorff's political adviser, in his book, *Could We have Avoided or Won the War?*]

THE turning-point of the war was now at hand. The Germans had struck four heavy blows without securing a decision. The Battle of the Lys secured no strategic result. The Third Battle of the Aisne "was also a failure in spite of the gain of considerable territory and despite the brilliant conduct of our troops. The railway junction at Reims had not fallen, and the railway system of the Marne sector was not favourable to us." \* Men of high military standing in Germany "desired the cessation of the operations, and advocated withdrawal to the original positions;" † but Kuhlmann, the Foreign Minister, who rightly interpreted the feeling at home, was displaced by the military clique when he said that the war was not to be ended by purely military decisions. Yet Bauer tells us that "the army was worn out; the majority of the subordinate leaders (captains, lieutenants, and N.C.O.'s) had been either killed or wounded, as had also a large proportion of the best troops. Reserves were giving out, and the fresh troops which had been brought to the front had been infected with Socialist and Bolshevik ideas and were of no real use against

\* Bauer, *ibid.*

† *Frankfurter Zeitung* (June 8, 1919).

the enemy." The last sentence, it must be remembered, was penned by Ludendorff's adviser, who was anxious to prove that the army was not beaten in the field, and only gave in because of the disaffection of the home population. This is, of course, to invert the order of things. The people only began to fail when they saw the losses growing steadily, and victory no nearer. While *nations* fight, the *moral* of the armies is the *moral* of the people; and in Germany all would have been well but for the fact that Ludendorff could not secure indisputable victory.

During the three months of the offensive the balance of numbers had been gradually turning. The Germans had struck in March with a superiority of over 300,000 in rifle strength. At the beginning of July this had dwindled to less than half, and August saw the Allies in possession of an effective rifle strength some 280,000 in excess of that held by Germany. What had brought about this change? The great defeat in March had shown the United States that they must hasten the dispatch of troops to Europe, and the actual numbers sent in the next few months deserve to be put on record. In April 117,212 crossed the Atlantic, in May 224,345, and in June 276,372. The advocates of unrestricted submarine warfare boasted that not more than 50,000 would be able to cross the ocean, and not that number unless they could fly! With these pleasantries the Germans believed what they wished to believe. It was, of course, true that not all those who came could be put into the line at once. But the fact that they were there encouraged Marshal Foch to use his forces more freely. At the height of the March offensive General Pershing went to Foch and placed the American troops and *matériel* at his absolute disposal, and it was agreed that, for the present, the men should be brigaded with British and French troops. The United States could have proved their devotion to the cause of the Allies no more perfectly than by resigning the natural desire to have their own army fighting as an army at the side of the Allies. At the time of the Second Battle of the Marne there were in France some twelve divisions, each of 30,000 men. British troops had been brought from Salonika, from Palestine, and from England. Even Italy had sent a corps in exchange for the British and French troops still left to assist in the defence of the Venetian plain.

In this way the Allies had not only written off their losses, but had even increased their fighting strength to some 300,000 in excess of that with which they faced the March offensive. They were able during July to pass from equilibrium to superiority over the Germans. But we must not think of the German army as gravely inferior to that which struck between the Scarpe and the Oise in March. It had suffered heavy losses, and the losses falling with undue weight upon the subordinate command weakened the whole organisation for the offensive. But the troops had been rested and retrained between each of the offensives. The Second Battle of the Somme and the Battle of the Lys formed one offensive, and there was nearly a month's interval between the end of this phase and the opening of the second. The Third Battle of the Aisne and the Battle of Compiègne lost their impetus much more quickly than the first offensive. And then succeeded another month's rest and reorganisation. On 14th July the Germans had about 130 divisions in the line, and 81 in reserve. Of these 62 were fresh, and 30 of them were placed behind the troops holding the sector between Château-Thierry and the Argonne. These dispositions indicated the direction of the next offensive. Another attack was designed against the British front in Flanders; but by 12th July the French Intelligence knew that the next main attack would be delivered on each side of Reims.



The city had twice resisted direct assault, and yet it was of very considerable importance. The railway system which fed Boehn's 7th Army and Mudra's 1st Army in the Aisne-Marne pocket was ill-fitted to supply the number of troops who lay there. If Reims, with its important railway junction, could be added, the position would be vastly improved.

But Reims was only a minor objective. The whole of the Marne was to be captured, and the railway connecting Paris and the eastern front was to be severed preparatory to cutting off the eastern armies from those in the centre and west. Mudra, who had replaced Fritz von Below, was to strike south-east and east to cut off Reims from the west, while the groups of divisions under General Lindequist and General von Gontard were to strike east of Reims in a south-westerly direction. The combined thrusts were to join hands the second day, when Reims would be cut off completely. Epernay, Reims, and Châlons were all to be entered on the second day. General von Einem, the former Prussian War Minister, had some twenty-five divisions in line in his 3rd Army, with ten in reserve for the attack east of Reims. Boehn had been reinforced by the army of Mudra, and there lay in reserve another army under General von Eben. This army had been brought from the East, and its rôle was to take advantage of any chance which offered. On the Allied side Gouraud's 4th French Army, with Americans forming part of its left flank, faced Einem with not half the number of troops of the attacking army in the front lines. General Berthelot's 5th Army lay between Dormans and Reims, facing Mudra. Between Dormans and the Ourcq was Degoutte's 6th Army, and between the Ourcq and Soissons was the 10th Army under Mangin. This general, who had won fame at Verdun, had shared some of the ill-favour of Nivelle after the Second Battle of the Aisne, though he had been exonerated after examination. Marshal Foch gave him command of an army once more, and his confidence was justified.

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Since the end of the Battle of Compiègne the Allies had been active over the three sectors weakened by the offensive. The positions about Merris were strengthened by several small Australian attacks, and near Merville two British divisions much improved the defences of Hazebrouck. In the Somme area a brilliant little action was fought on Independence Day by some units of the 33rd American Division and the Australians. Hamel and Vaire Wood were captured with 1,500 prisoners for a total loss of about 500. The French on 10th July captured the village of Castel west of the Avre, south-east of Amiens. Of more importance to the fortunes of the war were several local actions fought by the French between Soissons and Château-Thierry. Mangin's troops on 29th June advanced on a front of five miles to a depth of a mile about Ambleny, where their positions had been dominated by the higher ground across a ravine. Assisted by the new "mosquito" tanks they pushed their way against the flanks of the German positions, and ended the day with a situation vastly improved both for defensive and offensive purposes. A few days later the 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the 2nd American Division skilfully captured Vaux and the wood to the west of it, a few miles from Château-Thierry. At the end of the first week in July two other local actions had improved the positions east of Villers-Cotterets forest. On the 10th the village of Corcy, midway between Longpont and the Ourcq, was captured. Two days later the French captured the village of Longpont and Chavigny Farm, near Faverolles. These actions had their importance when Mangin and Degoutte passed to the offensive. They seemed at the time to

be of little account, but while they were constantly testing the German dispositions they were gaining valuable ground for the launching of an offensive.

About midnight on the 14th July the guns began to thunder on the fifty-mile front between Fossoy on the Marne and Massiges in Champagne. The bombardment was expected, and the French guns anticipated it with a skilful shelling of the German batteries and places of assembly. Gouraud's bombardment was particularly well placed, and this added a touch of disorganisation to the attack. Four hours later the infantry assaults began between Fossoy and Vigny, and east of Reims. The assault welled over west of Château-Thierry; but at Vaux the Americans counter-attacked promptly and vigorously, and even captured a commanding officer. Farther east a considerable amount of success was won. Under cover of a dense smoke



Scene of the last German Attack.

screen and protected by a skilful barrage the Germans crossed the Marne between Château-Thierry and Dormans. The first detachments got across in small canvas boats, and when across proceeded to advance against the high ground beyond while pontoons were constructed in their rear. The Allies counter-attacked vigorously, but were unable to prevent the Germans establishing a bridgehead across the river, which is here about eighty yards across. They were subjected to a concentrated fire from machine guns and artillery, and in their rear the low-flying French aeroplanes bombed the pontoons and the columns preparing to cross the river in reinforcement of their comrades who were fighting below Passy and Courthiezy. At nightfall they had pressed as far south as St. Agnan and La Chapelle-Monthodon, and were in possession of the high ground in this area.

On the Montagne de Reims, the wooded height below Reims, Berthelot's troops



had withdrawn, under Mudra's fierce onslaught, from their outpost positions, but stood firm astride the Ardre at Marfaux, where the Alpini of the 2nd Italian Corps impressed the Germans with a wholesome respect for their fighting power. Between Chatillon and Cuchery they had not withdrawn so far in spite of the heavy assault, and the west flank of the Reims defences was little impaired. East of Reims, however, the battle was practically decided in the one day's fighting. Gouraud's defensive in depth proved the destruction of the German plan. The outpost zone was manned by picked machine gunners, and their rôle was one that called for unlimited heroism and initiative. They were a sacrifice to the safety of the army. In the deep zone over which their positions were dotted they fought off and broke up the heavy attacks of Einem's shock troops. Some of them held out the whole day, and continued to warn the main defensive zone in the rear of the movements in their vicinity. They sold their lives at a great price; and, though many were overwhelmed, Gouraud's success owed everything to them. For when the shock troops penetrated and went forward with that "fresh merriness of war" which was so much praised by the Germans in the autumn of 1914, they came up against the main defensive with their impetus lost, with machine guns spluttering in their rear. There were no smoke screens to hide what was afoot in this area, and the second lines, rushing ahead with the field guns, offered a fair target which the French gunners did not miss. Gouraud lost some men, but his toll of wounded was small, and not a single gun was missing. The Germans at one time penetrated into Prosnes, but were pushed out again by a prompt counter-attack. The same fate befell them at Perthes; and at the end of the day the front zone had been evacuated, but the main position was intact. Yet on this front among the divisions engaged were the 3rd Guard, Guard Reserve, and Guard Cavalry (dismounted), and two of Bavarians. Even the German tanks failed to ensure success, coming to grief through land mines or anti-tank guns. With this check the German plan broke down. It was essential for the troops to cut behind Reims from the east if this city was to fall and allow the Germans to get to the Marne between Epernay and Châlons.

But Ludendorff did not, as yet, realise how badly astray his plans had gone. During the night the fighting south of and along the Marne continued, but the troops stood at Mareuil, and commanded the approaches from the high ground beyond. On the following day a heavy attack south of Maisons de Champagne advanced about a mile across the outpost zone, but was then checked. Between the morning and early afternoon, after an intense bombardment, five heavy assaults were delivered between Prunay and Auberive; but each of them was shattered, and it remains a wonderful achievement for the Allies to have so treated a very heavy concentration of picked troops that they succumbed to exhaustion after twenty-four hours. Mudra, however, gained some ground west of Epernay. The thrust in this direction became of greater importance owing to the check east of Reims. Mareuil fell and the Germans pushed their advance astride the Marne to Chêne-la-Reine and Montvoison. The latter village, after changing hands several times, remained in German hands, and Berthelot had to withdraw some two miles. Degoutte recovered the high ground above St. Agnan and La Chapelle-Monthodon, and every effort of Boehn failed to dislodge him. Thus the end of the second day found the Germans making way only in the direction of Epernay. On the 17th Mudra attacked Berthelot's line with increased fury, and pushed his way out of the Ardre valley to Pourcy; but a brilliant counter-attack by the corps of Italian

Alpini flung them back once more. Farther south the French were pushed a little farther towards Epernay ; but they were able to hold their own south of the Marne, and at night recovered Montvoison.

On the night of the 17th the German Staff could not ignore the fact that they had been decisively checked. They had flung more and more troops into the pocket below the Aisne, and the communications, which had not been adequate to supply the troops before the offensive, were now strained to breaking point. The troops across the Marne were living a hand-to-mouth existence, with their pontoons constantly liable to interruption from bombing aeroplanes and the artillery, under a continual bombardment from the air as well as from the ground. A carrier pigeon which was caught described one officer's impressions of the position as "worse than hell." It was the moment Foch had been waiting for, and he seized it at once, delivered his counter-attack, and the Germans never again regained the initiative. Their plans melted like snow in the sun, until at length they were driven in hasty retreat to the frontiers.

**Foch's Counter-stroke.**—At 4.30 on the morning of 18th July the 10th Army of General Mangin and the 6th Army of General Degoutte advanced on the twenty-seven mile front between Fontenoy, on the Aisne, and Belleau, north-east of Château-Thierry. Colonel Bauer pointed out that, before the attack, the railway communications were not favourable to the support of the armies in the pocket between Soissons and Reims, and the new German attack merely exaggerated the difficulty. Its one justification was that it promised to revolutionise the communications in a day or two. But to achieve such a transformation Reims must fall, and this success turned upon a victory over Gouraud's army. On the other hand, Foch had been attracted by the chances of a counter-offensive against the Soissons-Château-Thierry front. In the Third Battle of the Aisne he had already proposed to take advantage of this open flank ; but the rapid fall of Soissons cautioned patience. As soon as he knew with some certainty that the next German offensive would be delivered on both sides of Reims, he began to prepare for the battle which was to turn the tide of the war. At the beginning of July he arranged to withdraw the eight French divisions from Flanders, and borrowed four British divisions to replace French troops south of the Somme. On 14th July he asked Haig to replace these divisions by others and place four at his complete disposal. This was agreed to, and Foch had thus collected eight French divisions and the 15th, 34th, 51st, and 62nd British divisions. When it was seen that Reims was securely held, Mitry's 7th Army, which had been held in reserve, was quietly placed on the front between Dormans and Vaux, while Degoutte's 6th Army took up the sector between Vaux and Faverolles on the Ourcq. On the night of the 17th these dispositions were taken, and the Allied army was heavily weighted on the line between Soissons and Château-Thierry.

The German positions at the moment resembled those in the First Battle of the Marne. There was the same attempt to push forward south and south-east, with only a weak flank holding off the Allies from cutting across to their rear. If the Allies could have cut through the line completely the Germans must have suffered disaster. But a heavy defeat could be inflicted without completely cutting the line. The railway line which supplied the pocket passed through the Soissons junction. A few miles to the east, at Missy-sur-Aisne, the Germans had built a short line connecting this double-line track with the single line which ran along the north



of the Aisne through Berry-au-Bac and the junction of Guignicourt to the north-east. If the Allies could bring Missy-sur-Aisne under their guns, with direct observation, the precarious railway communications would be rendered useless, and a retreat would be imposed upon the Germans. The peril from this direction was so obvious that the German Staff had prepared for it.\* Nothing except incredible arrogance and the shrinkage of reserves can explain the launching of an offensive, if the Staff had any knowledge of the state of Foch's reserves. The French Intelligence Department, the "Second Bureau" General Headquarters, furnished the Command-in-Chief each day with a schedule of the total number of German divisions, the number in reserve, and how many were fresh, how many reconstituted, and how many were worn-out. These estimates, inferences founded upon information collected from numerous sources, have been checked later by the facts as given in official German reports and found to be remarkably correct.

Such was the position on the morning of 18th July. Mangin, as we have seen, had been preparing by careful local actions for the approaching battle, and during the night of the 17th the troops were concentrated and a large number of new "mosquito" tanks were brought up. There was a heavy thunderstorm and the noise of the approaching tanks was completely drowned. Boehn had in line between Soissons and Château-Thierry some eight divisions, with six in reserve. There was no appreciable opening bombardment; but at 4.30 the guns began to thunder and spit forth their gas and high explosive shell deep into the German front. Behind the barrage came the swiftly moving tanks, and then the infantry. The flat country north of the Ourcq offered every opportunity to the tanks, and the Allied advance was at once successful. Two miles south-west of Soissons stands the little hill called the Mont de Paris, which gives direct observation over the town and the vital railway junction beyond. Before 10.30 Mangin's troops had complete possession of this commanding point, and the railway junction was at their mercy. A little farther south cavalry passed through Berzy-le-Sec and cut the main road between Soissons and Château-Thierry. Chaudun, five miles from the original line, was entered by a Zouave regiment, which took over 1,500 prisoners and easily defeated several columns of reserves. In some places the Germans were found asleep in their dug-outs. The surprise had been complete, and Mangin had at one place advanced eight miles, and the average over the left flank was five miles. Degoutte's troops also made a considerable advance, his left reaching Chouy, Neuilly-St.-Front, and Priez, while the Americans on his right took Courchamps, Torcy, and Belleau, and advanced some distance beyond. The Germans still maintained themselves at Noroy, above the Ourcq; but they had lost 16,000 prisoners and 50 guns. Below Reims Berthelot's army advanced about a mile astride the Avre.

During the night Boehn reacted sharply from Oulchy-le-Château with considerable reserves; but the French stood firm and held the bulk of their gains. On the 19th the Germans delivered a series of heavy attacks against Mangin's left, which gave some ground, while his right was brought forward still more. But the German position was critical, and, like experienced soldiers, they realised it at once, and made arrangements to check the advance where it most threatened their positions. On the two flanks, Mangin and Berthelot found themselves hard pressed to maintain their positions. On the sector below Soissons the struggle became most bitter. Positions won in the first day of the counter-attack had to be abandoned, and Foch began to throw in

\* Ludendorff, *My Memories*, p. 666.

more and more of his available reserve. The 51st and 62nd Divisions were sent over to the front below Reims to assist Berthelot, and they were engaged at once in heavy actions astride the Ardre valley. Their advance during the next few days was made step by step. The Americans on the 20th captured the high ground near Etrepilly and thus dominated the line of retreat from Château-Thierry, and the town was evacuated that evening. It was methodically sacked before it was abandoned, and the correspondents vouch for an orgy of wanton and senseless damage which is almost incredible of intelligent beings. Mirrors smashed, pictures destroyed, even toys broken—these are not the work of sane people. Yet this barbarity must not blind us to the great skill and courage of the German fighting during this critical period. As more and more reserves\* were thrown in, Foch had also to reinforce the armies of Mangin and Degoutte, and there were anxious days at Foch's headquarters. Pétain, who ever fought with a thrifty husbandry, and Fayolle, who was in charge of this sector of the battle front, viewed with misgiving the swift shrinkage of their reserves. But Foch acted with a sure instinct. Reserves are destined to be used at a certain moment, and it is merely prudent generalship to throw them in when the hour has struck.

The Germans had to win the power to retreat ; and the evacuation of so great a pocket through such poor communications must have turned into a rout if made under pressure. The retirement was first observed to be in progress on the 19th, and Mangin, Degoutte, Mitry, and Berthelot strove with all their power to harass the retirement and throw the troops into disorder. On the 21st Mangin advanced once more to Ploisy, Parcy-Tigny, St.-Remy, and Blanzay. All these places lie some distance westward of the Soissons-Château-Thierry road, which had been crossed in the first day of the counter-blow. The troops even reached Buzancy and Hattennes on this day ; but the strength of the resistance may be gathered from the fact that a week later the British divisions seized Buzancy, but were still unable to retain it. Degoutte by this time had established himself across the Soissons-Château-Thierry road. His right lay at Chartèves on the Marne, near Jaulgonne, and his left ran through La Croix. But we must notice that Boehn was still holding the Allies off the railway line which runs from Oulchy-le-Château. The Germans were now once more across the Marne. The withdrawal was one of the most terrible experiences of the war ; and yet the men took up a firm front on the north bank of the river. In order to evacuate the great stores which had been accumulated in the pocket, every avenue of escape had to be kept open. Degoutte on the 22nd reached Brecy. He was marching at right angles to the line of the retreat from the Marne, and he made his way against repeated counter-attacks. The Americans this day captured Jaulgonne, and Mitry's troops crossed the river west of Dormans. But Berthelot had not sufficient troops to hamper the German retreat from the west of Reims, and the German withdrawal pivoted on this flank. He made a small advance towards Vignay ; but the resistance was insuperable. It was also on the 22nd that Gouraud moved forward on the eastern sector of the front attacked by Einem, and between the Suippe and the Main de Massiges he recovered the bulk of his original positions. The Germans were now casting about for reserves, and Gouraud's attack was a useful operation, confronting the Germans with a dilemma—either to risk a disastrous withdrawal from the Marne or the loss of all their gains east of Reims.

\* Ludendorff now abandoned the idea of another offensive in Flanders, and the reserves accumulated for that purpose were sent to the Anne-Marne area. [*My Memories*, p. 674.]



Mangin, on the 23rd, once more seized Parcy-Tigny, with the assistance of the British 15th and 34th Divisions. The struggle on this sector of the front was still ebbing and flowing. Degoutte attacked again towards Fère-en-Tardenois; but the steadfast defence about Oulchy-le-Château was still maintained, and the precious days necessary to evacuate the German force were thus gained. But Mitry was now crossing the Marne in force. The troops had been engaged continuously for nine days. Both sides were weary, but the Allies were more weary, though their spirit burned more fiercely. They had now the elation of having decisively checked a great German onslaught, and then of constant if small advances. On the 24th Mangin and Degoutte both achieved considerable success, and for the first time since the end of the Third Battle of the Aisne the Soissons-Château-Thierry road was completely in their hands. Oulchy was captured at last, and Villemontoire was entered once more. But though the former could not be relinquished without grave consequences, it was still imperative to restrain Mangin's left. A determined counter-attack was made and Villemontoire was recovered. Farther south the success had been more marked. Degoutte once again seized Brecy and Chatelet Wood, and the French with the Americans advanced astride the Château-Thierry-Fère-en-Tardenois road. Epieds, recaptured by the Germans during the night, was entered once more, and the line at night lay north of Courpoil. More of the Forest of Fère was occupied, and Dormans was taken.

After a whole week of fighting the Germans still clung to the Marne near Dormans. But the strain on them was beginning to tell; and on the next day (25th) General von Eben's army, which was to have taken up the pursuit when the Allies broke, was interpolated between Hutier and Boehn in order to make a final attempt to fortify positions on the Vesle, and to gain more time for withdrawal from the south. When Mangin advanced again he found the resistance stronger; but he recovered Villemontoire, where the Germans had possession of dug-outs in the hillside which could not be reduced by artillery. East of Oulchy, at Nanteuil-notre-Dame, the Germans were firmly entrenched. Picked rearguards, with numbers of machine guns, held up the advance and took a heavy toll of the assailants. There was little progress anywhere on this day or the next. Mitry had still been unable to push the Germans completely away from the Marne, and from this fact we may measure the skill and resolution of the retirement. Berthelot again attacked at Vrigny, but without making any considerable headway. Gouraud once more struck between the Suippe and Massiges, and was able to recover almost the whole of his original positions.

**The Retreat.**—On the night of the 26th the retreat began in earnest. Behind the front the airmen noted the roads thoroughly congested on the next day, and took advantage of the splendid mark. The main road to Fère was blocked for some hours; but the Allies could not make rapid headway. The ground was wooded and sloping, and the rearguards were able to check the advance from such favourable positions. But Mitry and Berthelot succeeded at length in pressing the Germans away from the Marne, and reached the line Ronchères-Passy-Grigny-Jonchery. The columns were now converging upon Fère-en-Tardenois, and on the following day it was occupied; but to the east of the town the Germans gave ground slowly. There were bitter actions at Seringes and Sergy, where the ground gave facilities for defence; and the Americans there fought some of their fiercest engagements. On the left the 15th and 34th British Divisions were heavily engaged. They forced their way into Buzancy, but could not maintain their position. It was not until the

30th that the town was finally captured. The struggle still continued about Seringes and Sergy, where the 4th Guards Division were finally defeated by the American troops. At the end of the month the Allies had taken 34,000 prisoners. The Germans claimed about two-thirds of this number, but the nature of the fighting gives little support to their claim. The Germans continued to hold their flanks with the greatest skill and resolution. On 1st August the Hartennes plateau was at length seized in a converging attack from the west, north, and south. This position lies on the Soissons-Château-Thierry road, and the Germans now held a flattened arc on the Soissons-Reims road. The centre had been withdrawn, but neither Mitry nor Berthelot could hasten the withdrawal. Mangin, on the following day, initiated a movement which accelerated the retreat. French troops with great dash captured Mercin, two miles to the west of Soissons, and began to enter the suburbs of the city. That night they entered it, and advanced to Cuffies on the north. The city was burning, but this did not make its military value less. The French could now exercise their pressure astride the Aisne, and the seal was set to Mangin's victory. On the following day the fruits of the capture of Soissons were seen, for by evening the Allied troops were in occupation of the Aisne and Vesle up to Fismes. The rearguards had been withdrawn, and the advance had been rapid. Berthelot and Mitry had also advanced; and on 4th August, the anniversary of the war, the Vesle was bridged near Braisnes and Jonchery. Fismes lies below the Vesle, and the American troops with great skill and resolution attacked the town from three sides, and on the morrow occupied it. The river line was now reached west of Reims, and the Germans were withdrawing to the north bank. Two days later the French and Americans had crossed the river and established a bridgehead in spite of repeated counter-attacks.

But the curtain was about to ring up on another scene by which Foch sealed his recapture of the initiative. No one knew at the time how great a change had come over the war. On 6th August Foch was made a field-marshal, an honour which he deserved more than any one knew. For in appreciating the significant and important victory of the Allies, which was marked as much by its skill as by its daring and resolution, we must not fail to pay tribute to the masterly nature of the retreat; and no one could know that the defeat marked a point in history, that never again would the Germans move except under the will of the Allies. The attack in Flanders had been countermanded on 24th July. The reserves of the northern command had been summoned hastily to the Aisne front. At that moment it was estimated that the Allies and the enemy had about an equal number of combatants; but the Allies had a greater number of divisions in reserve and a greater number of fresh reserves. Foch laid before the subordinate command on that day these considerations, and pointed out that the turning-point had been reached. But it required a great general to seize upon the just moment to retort the German offensive on the heads of those who launched it; and we can see in this decision of Foch's a factor which differentiated him from every other general in the war. It was with only an equality of forces that he had turned the tables, whereas Ludendorff had struck in March with a superiority of some 300,000. Where other generals wavered, Foch remained equable and firm. "You cannot defend any longer," he said to one of his generals at Fère-Champenoise. "Then we'll attack." It was precisely this spirit which won the war. For, as Foch said in one of his lectures, "A battle lost is one which you think you have lost." It is on the human spirit that victory at length turns; and on the account of Ludendorff's apologist, it was the German spirit which failed.



## BOOK VIII.

### THE HUNDRED DAYS (August–November 1918).

WITH the Second Battle of the Marne and Foch's counter-attack between Soissons and Château-Thierry the tide finally turned ; but though this was realised at the time by the one great general of the war, it was not until the Battle of Amiens had been fought and won by the Allies that it was appreciated by the German Staff. The recognition of this change was only made by the Allied peoples gradually ; and to the German people, so long and so persistently fed on illusions, it came with the shock of a betrayal only at the very end. The Allies, who had not wavered under the terrible blows of Ludendorff's offensive, hardly dared to believe that the war held no further vicissitudes for them ; but with the unbroken series of victories, culminating in the request for an armistice, the conviction grew to maturity.

The last phase of the war comprised almost a hundred days of continuous fighting, " the whole line thrusting and elbowing its way forward. No stop ! No rest ! " \* Divisions in such a narrative can only be conventional or for the sake of convenience. The one logical division is overlaid with incident which tends to submerge it in the general stream of the greatest campaign in history. The general offensive under which Ludendorff's nerve failed began on 26th September ; but in the Second Battle of the Marne there had been a moment of crisis, of incipient panic, when only the iron will of Ludendorff stood between the German armies and disaster. But the German general put new heart into his subordinates, the moment passed, and the retreat from the Marne became an operation which future soldiers will study with lively appreciation. It was while this movement was still in progress that Foch, appreciating its just value where even the more discerning tended to be misled by its obvious competence, called the commanders-in-chief of the French, British, and American armies together and analysed the situation. On 24th July the generals met. At the moment all that one could say was that the fifth German offensive had been turned into a defeat. The first three blows—towards Amiens, on the Lys, and on the Aisne—had achieved great though tactical results. The fourth, towards Compiègne, met with a decisive check ; and the fifth was first checked and then decisively defeated. But Foch saw more in the situation than the obvious fact. He pointed out that the combatants were at length equal numerically, but that the Allies had a greater number of divisions in reserve because of the number of divisions thrown into the battle by the Germans. They would shortly attain a superiority with regard to the number of fresh reserves. Their superiority in *matériel* and tanks was assured ; their superiority in artillery was increasing ; and their reservoir of reserves, by the help of the United States, was illimitable. In effect, the Germans were reduced to two armies : one sacrificed to hold the front, and the other the

\* Foch in an interview with Mr. Ward Price, published in *The Daily Mail*.

"shock" army, already considerably weakened, manœuvring behind this wavering line, without hope of any considerable reinforcement. The moral factor was also on the side of the Allies, since the constant deceptions of the German Staff were bound to recoil upon themselves. "The Allied armies have come to-day to the turn of the tide. . . . They have recovered the initiative; they can and must keep it. . . . The moment has come to pass from the attitude of general defensive, imposed till now by their numerical inferiority, and to pass to the offensive." He then asked the generals to submit plans for local offensives with limited objectives, to be begun at once.\*

If there are still any who fail to realise the genius of Marshal Foch, the official account of this meeting should produce conviction. There were many impatient critics of his direction during the five blows of the German army, and even among his immediate entourage there were some who doubted his prevision and distrusted his judgment when, with unerring instinct, he turned the tables upon the Germans. The history of the last phase of the war did ample justice to him. The general offensive on the Western front had not begun when Bulgaria opened negotiations. Already there had been signs that the enemy knew how the war was tending. As early as 12th July Hertling, the new German Chancellor, had begun to water down Germany's terms. Belgium, one of the tests for the Allies, was held only "as a pawn" for negotiations. The Vice-Chancellor, Payer, attempted to climb down farther, without coming down altogether, exactly two months later; and Hindenburg tried to stem the movement towards compromise by a manifesto which laid the blame for it upon Allied propaganda. Two days later an offer of a separate peace was made to Belgium, and at once rejected. Austria-Hungary issued an appeal for a "non-binding confidential exchange of opinions." This, too, was rejected. Its effect upon the Allies was to show them how the land lay, and the lesson was not lost upon those who were associated with Germany. The defection of Bulgaria was directly attributable to these signals of distress, and to the last clumsy efforts of the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor on 24th September to maintain the victorious pose while asking as clearly as their pride would allow for peace. The East was beginning to fall into the hands of the Allies. Allenby and Marshall in a few short weeks set the seal to Turkey's downfall, and the whole flimsy edifice of German *Imperium* came down with a crash. After the Second Battle of the Marne the disparity between the rifle strength of the two groups grew apace. At the end of August the Allies had a superiority of nearly 300,000; at the end of October, of about 400,000.

On 2nd October a representative from the High Command met the party leaders of the Reichstag and disclosed the true state of affairs to them. Everything had turned on numbers, and the Germans had come to their last reserves. Despite the cruel enslavement of Belgian workmen to work in German munition works, despite all the incredible barbarities of the Belgian and French deportations, the representative † of Ludendorff had to admit that they had come to the end. "In spite of every possible device, the strength of our battalions sank from about 800 in April to 540 by the end of September. And these numbers were only secured by the disbanding of 22 infantry divisions and 66 infantry regiments. . . . There is no prospect whatever of raising the strength. The current reserves, consisting of men

\* This account is founded upon the *Étude faite sur documents du G. Q. G. français*.

† Major Freiherr von dem Busche.



who are convalescent, combed-out men, etc., will not even cover the loss of a quiet winter's campaign. The inclusion of the 1900 class will only increase the strength of the battalions by 100, and *that is the last of our reserves*. The losses of the battle which is now in progress are, as I have stated, unexpectedly large, especially as regards officers. That is a decisive factor." He had further to make the unpalatable admission of a breakdown in *moral*, which he very carefully attributed to the tanks. "In cases where they suddenly emerged in huge masses from smoke clouds, our men were completely unnerved." "Local panics which completely upset our battle control" were caused. "Every day brings the enemy nearer his goal," and therefore he suggested that it would be well to break off hostilities, "so as to spare the German people and their Allies further sacrifice."

The war thus rang to its close. War, the means by which Germany had thought to secure the overlordship of Europe, was described by Jomini as a "terrible and impassioned drama." It had recoiled upon herself, and she had to liquidate her failure as best she could. The last steps in this failure it is our purpose now to describe. Foch had appreciated the lesson of the tank. The earlier stages of the war had checked the movement of the armies by imposing upon them the necessity for overwhelming concentrations of guns and men. Until some means could be found to break down the wire barriers and crush machine-gun nests, the armies tended to become immobile, and to advance only by small stages. Cambrai was the first battle of the new mode, and if there had been sufficient reserves at hand the future course of the war would have changed at that point. The great counter-attack of Foch between Soissons and Château-Thierry marked the final change. With a sufficiency of tanks, he could strike anywhere without a preliminary bombardment, and therefore secure the advantage of surprise. As soon as the battle tended to become static he could strike at another point, and so by stages draw in more and more of reserves until the moment permitted a general engagement which should be continued until the enemy surrendered or was driven from the field in rout. Haig was the first to open the new series of limited offensives, and he chose first to strike a blow in order to liberate Amiens and the Paris-Amiens railway. From that moment the battle never truly ceased, but flamed out here or there till the whole front blazed up in general offensive, and the armistice was signed with Foch holding aloft the spear which should give the *coup de grâce* to the reeling enemy.

## I. THE BATTLE OF PICARDY: AMIENS, BAPAUME, NOYON; THE WOTAN LINE, ST. GOBAIN.

"Unfortunately, the great Franco-British attack on, and break into, our 2nd Army followed on 8th August."—[Colonel Bauer in *Could we have Avoided or Won the War?*]

THE beautiful city of Amiens had been steadily going the way of Reims for over four months, when the French and British struck the blow which was immediately to deliver it. On 27th March it first came under the German guns, and three days later it was a deserted city. It was well that the civilian population had left, for the German airmen visited it nightly, and little by little its buildings began to show the scars of war. The beautiful old stained glass of the cathedral was irreparably damaged, but the injuries caused to the rest of the fabric and to the houses

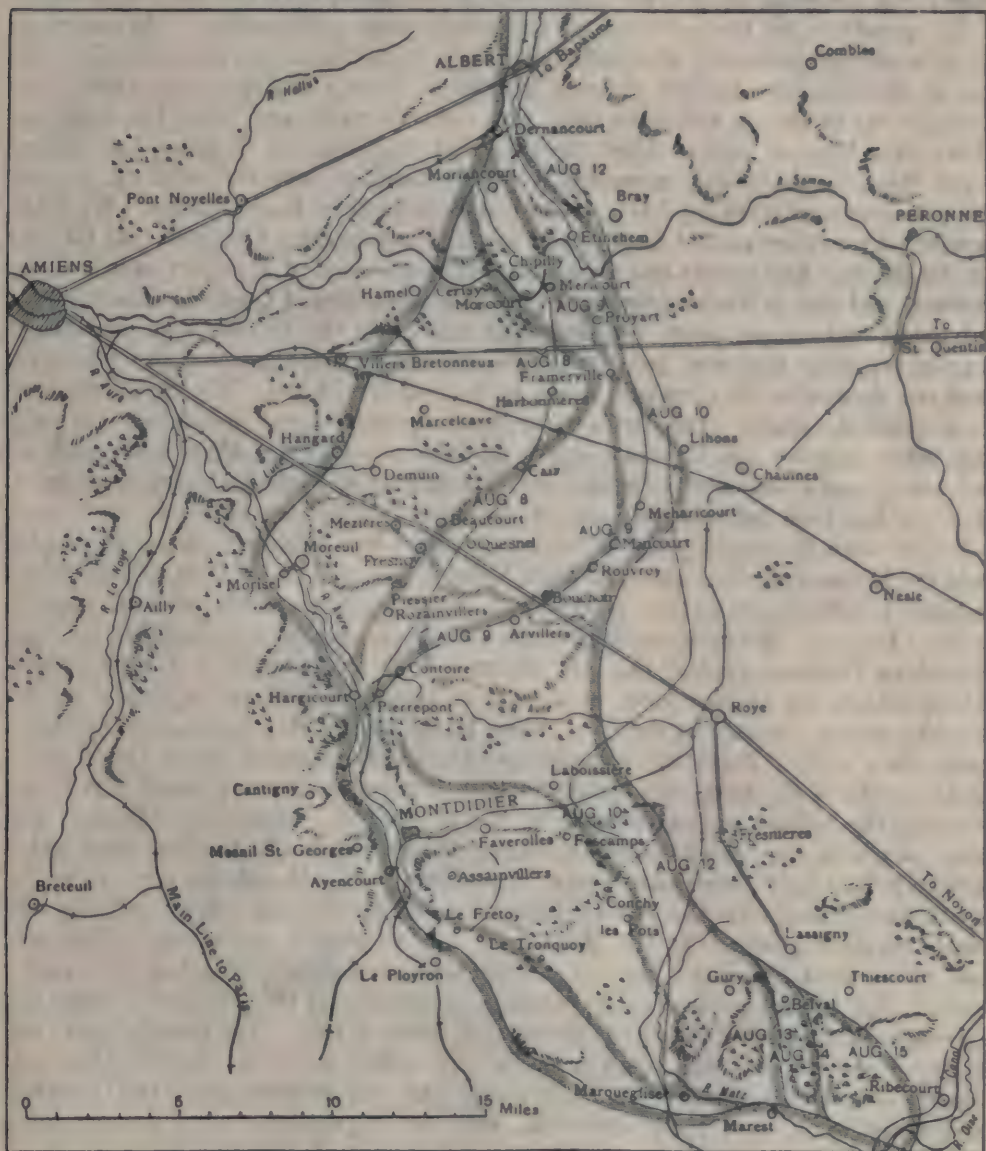
of the city were for the most part not beyond repair, though some four per cent. of the houses were reduced to complete ruin. But it was not this useless destruction that led Sir Douglas Haig to prepare a blow to disengage the city. Amiens was one of the most important centres of communications of the Allies ; and the stoppage of this junction gravely weakened the links between the British and French armies, and weakened also the effective force of the armies in the neighbourhood. It was to disengage the Amiens junction and the Amiens-Paris railway that motived Haig's project. As originally conceived on 13th July, the plan contemplated nothing more than this ; and when Rawlinson's Staff began to inform the corps commanders a week later, this limited purpose was all that inspired them. But in the following week Foch had taken the measure of the situation, and the operations took on a more ambitious colour. Débeney's 1st French Army was now to co-operate, and on the 28th it was placed under Haig's orders for that purpose. The troops which were to take part in the British part of the attack were the four divisions of the Canadian Corps ; the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Australian Divisions ; and the 58th, 18th, and 12th Divisions of the 3rd Corps. Seven of these divisions only were to be in the line ; and there were an equal number in the German line, though three less in immediate support.

Surprise being one of the chief features of Haig's plan, elaborate precautions were taken to ensure secrecy and to deceive the Germans. The Canadian divisions were set to work preparing an attack in the north, and tanks were openly concentrated there. Two Canadian battalions were placed on the Kemmel sector, casualty clearing stations were moved north, wireless stations were erected, and misleading messages were dispatched. It was not until 30th July that the divisional commanders were informed of the true point of attack. On that day the troops began to move south towards the neighbourhood of Amiens, but with the information that their ultimate destination might be the Reims-Soissons front, or the sector of Rawlinson's or Débeney's army. Entraining and detraining took place at night, and the battle positions were only approached during the hours of darkness. In the thickly wooded area of concentration the Canadian Corps lay concealed, and the noise of the tanks was drowned by the bombing aeroplanes which flew over the sector. The men took over their new positions, all but the outpost line, during the nights of the 4th, 5th, and 6th August. The junction of Débeney's 1st and Rawlinson's 4th Armies lay about Hangard. At length all was ready. The British Cavalry Corps, under General Cavanagh, lay in position ; and the Canadian cyclist battalion and two motor machine-gun batteries were on the Amiens-Roye road, ready to enter into the action at the earliest favourable moment. Rawlinson's front of attack stretched some eleven miles up to Morlancourt.

At 4.20 on the morning of 8th August a terrific bombardment was opened, and in a heavy ground mist the troops began to move forward behind the tanks and the barrage. So heavy was the bombardment and so swift the movement that the German guns frequently did not reply, and generally missed their mark. But the British aeroplanes were early at work, some far out bombing the German guns and the reinforcements ; others nearer to the battle area observing and reporting every significant movement ; others again bombing the demoralised Germans or emptying their machine guns into them. The Germans woke to find themselves in the throes of this terrible attack. The surprise was complete, and many men were taken in their beds. Others were eating a morning meal. Demuin, Marcelcave,



Cerisy fell rapidly. At Chipilly, north of the river, where the troops had lost direction in the mists and the dug-outs and rocky defences were more formidable, the resistance was sterner; and farther north the attack made little progress about Morlancourt. It was at the hinges of the attack that least was to be expected, and this



### The Battle of Amiens: the Allied Advance, August 8-15.

was fully realised about Morlancourt and at the junction with the French. Débeney's army did not advance until about three-quarters of an hour after Rawlinson's ; but when it started it made way rapidly. For the greater part of its front it had first to cross the Avre. But the crossings were rapidly seized, Morisel and Moreuil quickly

followed, and the troops marched below the Amiens-Roye road through Plessier and Fresnoy. They established contact with Brutinel's motor batteries, and, seizing Pierrepont, extended the front of their advance.

The swift whippet tanks went rapidly forward with the British, crushing machine-gun posts, rounding up prisoners, and even co-operating with the cavalry in skilful little operations for the reduction of elaborately organised positions. At one place they seized 700 prisoners, after inflicting heavy casualties on the garrison. In some places the resistance focused about a handful of houses, and the heavy tanks were brought up to thrust and push their way through walls, and bring the buildings down in a heap of ruins. After the Canadians had reached Mezières the cavalry went through the troops, occupying positions until the infantry came up, cutting off prisoners and breaking down the resistance with their fierce charges. With the armoured cars they caused local panics among the retreating Germans. At the end of the day the Australians and Canadians held a line east of Morcourt, south of the Somme, and east of Harbonnières and Caix to a point west of Quesnel. The distance advanced had, at one point, reached eight miles, and the British alone had taken 13,000 prisoners and over 300 guns. The cavalry captured some 2,500 prisoners, and one Australian division took 1,600 for a total loss of 300. The casualties were comparatively slight. Débeney's army had captured 3,350 prisoners. On only one other occasion—in Mangin's attack at Soissons—had the Allies made such an advance; and at one stroke Amiens, with the railway to Paris, had been disengaged. The day had been full of novel incident, showing the new arm, the tanks, in strange relations with the cavalry and infantry. Quesnel was captured during the night, and the Hussars charged ahead through Méharicourt, and the British line advanced against a stiffening resistance to Bouchoir, Rouvroy, Framerville, and the western edge of Proyart. North of the Somme the 12th Division, with a regiment of the 33rd American Division, pushed the line eastward past Dernancourt and Morlancourt. The positions on Chipilly spur, in a bend of the river, held out against repeated attacks during the bulk of the day. Some of the most bitter fighting of the battle took place there. From the high ground the Germans could sweep the country to the south of the river, and the Australians suffered much until about 5.30 in the evening the village and spur were at length cleared. Meanwhile Débeney had kept pace with the Canadians, and advanced the French line to Arvillers, from which village it bent back almost due westward to Pierrepont. Montdidier now lay to the south-west; and with the British lying close to the Chaulnes-Roye railway and road, Hutier's position in the Montdidier salient became precarious. Chaulnes, one of the most important junctions of the German defensive, lay but a few miles away. But the troops were now operating in the area of those defences which the Germans had occupied before the Somme offensive of 1916. The trenches were not highly organised, but they were defended with much wire, and formed admirable centres for machine-gun posts. Fresh troops had been brought up by the Germans, and there were fewer tanks available, and the engagements now became more equally and heavily contested.

The third day of the attack, however, saw two new developments. During the night Débeney suddenly pushed through the defences south of Montdidier, taking Assainvillers and Faverolles, on the Roye road. This movement made the position of Montdidier hopeless. The avenue of escape was so constricted that the garrison must lose heavily, and they risked being cut off. When placing Débeney's army



under the orders of Haig, Foch had reserved the 3rd Army of Humbert to throw in at the best moment. Humbert was now ordered to attack. He very naturally represented that he had no reserves. "Never mind," said Foch; "get on with it." \* It is precisely in such decisions we recognise the general of genius. Humbert's army lay on the right of Débeney, on those positions to which the troops had been forced back in the Battle of Compiègne (or the Matz). Following the now familiar method, he attacked on the morning of the 10th without artillery preparation. The result showed how justly Foch had analysed the situation. Hutier had been ordered to fall back on the 1917 positions between Chaulnes and the Oise, and Humbert's blow disordered his retreat. Attacking on the ten-mile front between Le Pleyron and Marquégglise, over a tangle of hilly, wooded country, he pushed the Germans over the Thiescourt ridge some five miles towards Lassigny. Montdidier was cut off, and the garrison surrendered with much material. The left of the 1st French Army then advanced very rapidly, and passed through Andechy. The British front was heavily engaged throughout the day. The Australians found Lihons, not two miles from Chaulnes, firmly held by a fresh division brought up from Cambrai; and though their right was covered by the Canadians, operating with tanks, little headway could be made. But farther north the advance was continued step by step, and the end of the day saw the three armies in line threatening the whole German position in this area. At Chilly the Canadians were not two miles from the Chaulnes-Roye railway. The two places were clearly doomed at the end of the second day of the battle, when the brilliant thrust of the Canadians already threatened to outflank Hutier's 18th Army. But the third day involved another great centre, Noyon, and Hutier's army was threatened on both flanks.

Heavy fighting over the whole front between Albert and the Oise took place on the 11th. During the night the 3rd Corps seized the high ground between Dernancourt and Etinehem, and the operations in this part of the line were linked up with those on the south of the river. The Australians seized Proyart, and the troops north of the river were then able to capture Etinehem. They pushed out their front to the east, and extended it northwards to include Meaulte. Below Proyart the Australians were again heavily engaged all day about Lihons. A German counter-attack forced them off the high ground on the west of the village; but they recoiled rapidly, and were in the outskirts of the town by evening. Farther south the Canadians pushed their front west of Fouquescourt. South of Damery, Débeney could make no headway, and the British cavalry, with the 32nd Division, who were attacking it directly, were held up by machine-gun fire. But Débeney's right flank was able to seize Les Loges, not five miles south of Roye, and Humbert made progress north of Roye-sur-Matz, and extended his front of attack to the Oise. The pace of the advance had slackened, though the struggle continued with the utmost severity. The Independent Air Force and the American Air Force were active during these nights; and the former raided Karlsruhe on the night of the 11th, reaching its objectives despite the fighting on both journeys. It was on the following day that Foch informed the Allied commanders that "since 15th July 120 German divisions have been engaged in battle. We have before us an opportunity which will not return and which demands every effort." Lihons was captured on this day, and the Allied armies made local advances at various points. But on the 13th, when Débeney's army ceased to be under the orders of Haig, the position had begun to be stabilised.

\* Interview with Mr. Ward Price, published in *The Daily Mail*.

The Allied armies were standing before the old defences of 1917. In places they were fourteen miles from their original line; and though the next few days witnessed important local advances, the "dead point" in the attack had arrived. Humbert captured Ribecourt, on the Oise, on the 14th; and the following day the 3rd Canadian Division at length captured Parvillers and Damery, about which places the struggle had ebbed and flowed for nearly a week. Débeney, on the 16th, captured Cæsar's Camp, one mile west of Roye, and entered St. Mard, a suburb not five hundred yards from the station.

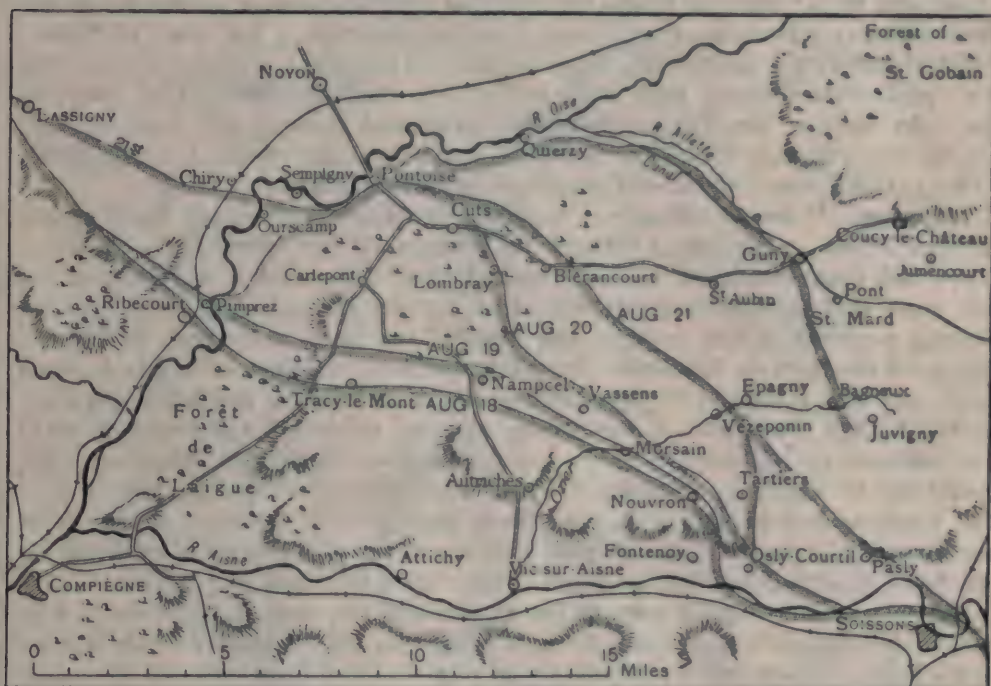
The Battle of Amiens may be said to have ended on this day. Its effect on the German Staff was decisive. The eighteen divisions which had held the line on 8th August had been reinforced by twenty divisions, eleven of them drawn from the local reserves, six from the Lille area, one from Flanders, and two from Verdun. The Germans began to withdraw from the Lys salient. On the 9th the British advanced over two thousand yards. Another withdrawal took place on the night of the 13th. The positions held about Serre were immensely strong; but the Germans could not afford to hold salients which might easily be cut off and even while they were held immobilised numbers of troops. The great need of the German Staff was the reconstitution of a powerful reserve, not for any offensive purpose—that had passed completely from the region of the possible—but in order to strengthen any fresh sectors which might be attacked. The positions between Beaumont-Hamel and Bucquoy were accordingly evacuated gradually. When the patrols of the New Zealanders found what was afoot they set themselves to hustle the retreat. On the 15th they crossed the Ancre at Beaucourt, and at night occupied Puisieux and Serre. The advance was by that time almost two miles deep. By these unambiguous signs the Germans declared to the world their apprehension. In the Battle of Amiens they had lost over 33,000 prisoners and 700 guns. Of this number some 20,000 had been captured by the 4th Army from seventeen different divisions, one of which, the 13th, was practically annihilated. Behind the impenetrable curtain by which Germany concealed her state from the world graver events were taking place. The battle was not six days old when "on 13th August, after receiving all the reports of the inglorious 8th of August, Ludendorff asked the Chancellor and (the Foreign Minister) von Hintze to meet him, and laid the complete military situation before them." On 14th August another meeting took place under the presidency of the Kaiser. G.H.Q. emphasised the necessity of a speedy conclusion of peace, as they "were still strong, but would have to reckon with an increasing deterioration of the military situation." \* Whatever mistakes Ludendorff made in his initial calculations, he now showed himself an uncompromising realist. He saw that he had lost. He knew that he could not make good the losses of the battle and be adequately prepared to meet the coming battles. He therefore wished, like any prudent speculator, to sell at once his rapidly depreciating stocks. But this was more easily conceived than executed. The Germans had been fed on victories, and the Government feared the effect of a sudden disillusionment. The clumsy attempts to fill the rôle of the relenting and pacific victor which followed were all that the German Government could achieve. Meanwhile the correspondents continued to hint at counter-offensives, and at length Ludendorff had even to warn them that this must cease. He found himself in a cleft stick. The blank cheque he had received on the German man-power was granted on the explicit understanding

\* Bauer, *The Delusion of Peace by Agreement*.



that victory would be purchased. But it was he who had given the assurance, and he left the Government to explain it away. For six weeks no one would even attempt it; and meanwhile, as Ludendorff very clearly saw, his opponent set himself to improve the occasion.

Foch did not content himself merely with a general summons to all ranks to continue the battle. He pointed out how its gains could best be exploited. The positions now occupied between Albert and the Oise had hardened into immobility; and the torn and ruined areas on which the Allies stood offered but poor chances for the immediate resumption of the Allied advance. But the flanks of these positions, especially the northern, offered a better battleground. "The results obtained by the 3rd French Army, operating with only its own normal resources, show what can



Mangin's Advance between the Oise and the Aisne.

be achieved by an extension of the offensive on the flanks of victorious armies." \* This comment gives the key to the operations which filled the period between the Battle of Amiens and the general offensive.

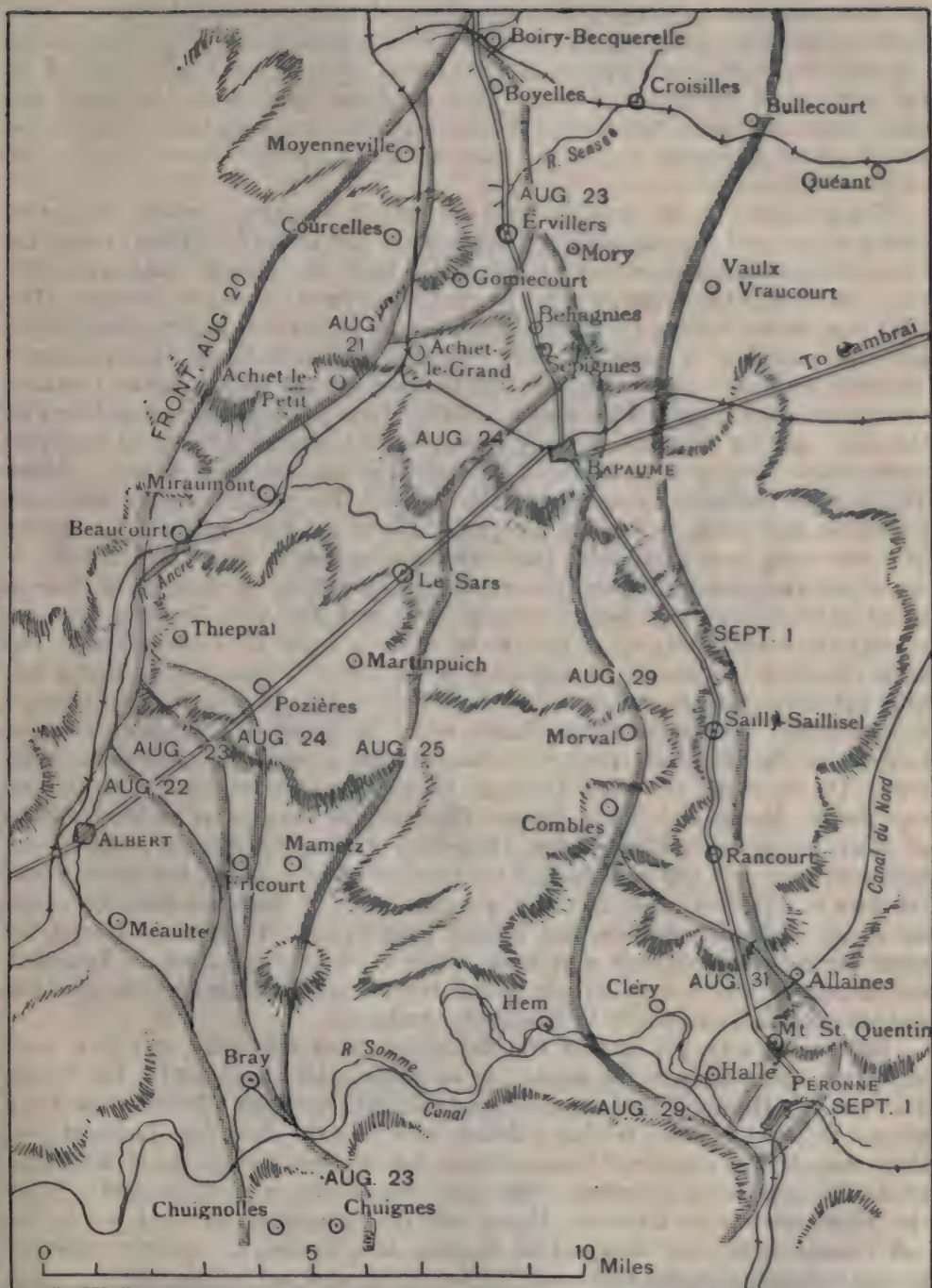
**Noyon.**—General Mangin's 10th Army was the first to move. It lay on the right of Humbert's army—i.e. on the flank of a victorious army. It will be remembered that in the Battle of Compiègne (or the Matz) the loss of the positions on the right bank of the Oise had led to the evacuation of the wooded region on the left bank. The reverse process had now begun. Humbert had thrust up his left to the neighbourhood of Lassigny, and captured Ribecourt. Mangin's aim was to recover the ground on the left of the Oise, and threaten the wooded high ground of St. Gobain. The left of his army lay in the triangle formed by the Oise, Ailette, and Aisne. On

\* *Pourquoi l'Allemagne a capitulé le 11 Novembre 1918. Étude faite sur documents du G. Q. G. français.*

the morning of the 17th the German positions at Autriches were captured, and on the following day the troops advanced between the Carlepont road and Fontenoy, a front of about ten miles. The extent of the advance was about 2,000 yards. The wooded hill west of Nampcel was captured with Tracy-le-Val; and, north of Fontenoy, Nouvion was occupied. Débeney on the following day entered Fresnières, on the Roye-Lassigny road, after conquering a resolute resistance, and reached the outskirts of Lassigny, while his left stormed Pimprez, on the Oise, and thus assisted the extreme left of Mangin. The 10th Army at the same time had conquered Morsain and Vassens. Two days later the same army made a big leap forward. After a day of heavy fighting, it cleared Ourscamp and Carlepont woods, and pushed up to the Oise at Sempigny and Pontoise. At the latter point it had cut the main road between Coucy and Roye; and the troops occupied Cuts and Blérancourt, which lay on the same highway. Mangin's troops were thus placed within a few miles of Noyon, which Humbert was approaching from the west. The right of his army had, on this day, pushed through the little wood at Orval to the neighbourhood of Chiry, on the right bank of the Oise, opposite Ourscamp, and Lassigny had been entered. On the following day Mangin occupied the southern banks of the Oise and Ailette as far as Guny, where the Roye-Coucy road crosses the Ailette.

**Bapaume.**—Meanwhile Haig was beginning to press the northern flank of the German armies in the salient between the Somme and the Ailette. The Canadian Corps had been withdrawn by this time. During the period it had been in the line, from that first brilliant advance which pushed forward eight miles into the German positions, it had engaged and defeated ten German divisions, and partly engaged five others on its flanks. Its maximum depth of penetration was fourteen miles, and with a total of 10,783 casualties (1,814 representing deaths) it had alone captured 9,131 prisoners. It was rapidly removed to the 1st Army area, there to win fresh laurels. It was still on its way thither when Byng's 3rd Army began the operations in which the Canadian Corps would co-operate when the hour struck. The Germans had already withdrawn from their forward positions on the front north-west of Bapaume. Though their withdrawal was a confession of weakness, its effect was to strengthen their positions. The Albert-Bapaume and Bapaume-Arras roads make an obtuse angle towards the west. From Bapaume the Cambrai railway runs to Achiet-le-Grand, where it diverges in another obtuse angle roughly parallel to the roads. The German positions lay on a line between Beaucourt and Moyenneville, which may be conceived as the base of the triangle, whose apex was Achiet-le-Grand. It was on the railway line that the Germans had established their main resistance. At 4.55 on the morning of the 21st, the 42nd, New Zealand, 37th (Harper's 4th Corps), 2nd and Guards Divisions (Haldane's 6th Corps) suddenly advanced in a fog. The ground was firm and not made uneven by recent bombardment, so that the tanks could be effectively used. The troops advanced with the bombardment, and the outer positions were rapidly overrun. The attack had again secured the advantage of surprise. The 5th and 63rd Divisions were sent through the 4th Corps Divisions as the attack progressed, and the 3rd went through the 2nd and Guards Divisions. The fog had thickened during the battle, and it was difficult for the units to keep their direction. But, though this gave a certain chance for rallying, the troops reached their objectives practically everywhere. There was fierce fighting at Miraumont and Achiet-le-Petit; but by nightfall the railway had been reached, and east of Courcelles and Moyenneville it was crossed. At its maxi-





The British Advance across the Ancre and over the old Battlefields of the Somme.

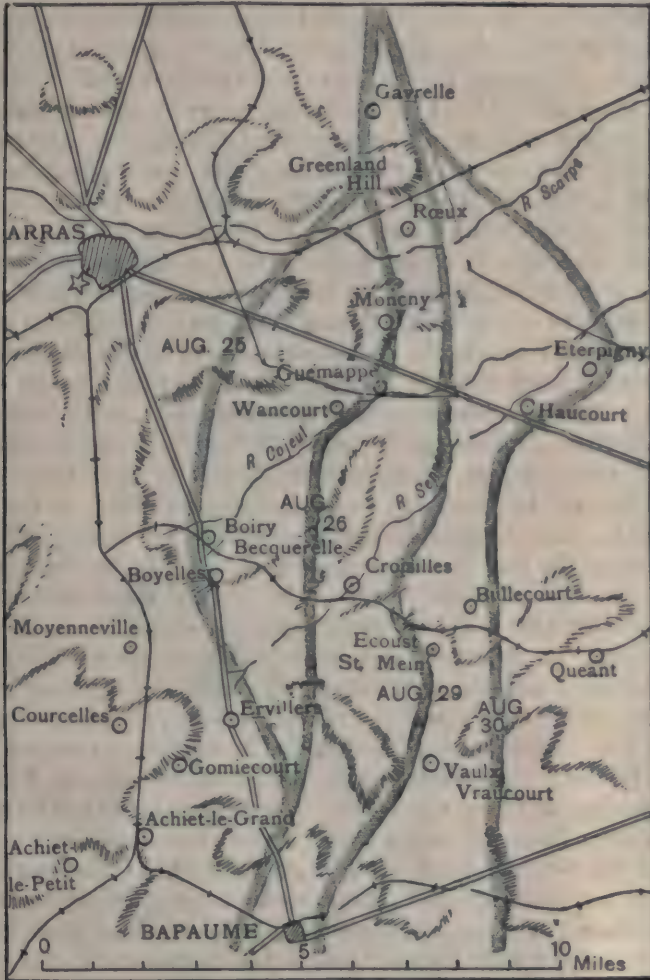
imum depth the advance was nearly three miles, and over 2,000 prisoners were taken. At Miraumont and Achiet-le-Petit vigorous counter-attacks were delivered. Just north of the former place lay the wireless signalling station and dovecot for carrier pigeons. Twice this strong point changed hands before it was finally captured on the morning of the following day. That night the Independent Air Force was again active far behind the front. Frankfort and Cologne were bombed; and the French visited Mannheim and Trèves, carrying thither a greater terror than the air raids on London had caused.

The 4th Army again moved forward on the following day, crossing the Ancre, seizing Albert, and carrying the line forward to the east of the Albert-Bray road. On the 23rd the attack was extended northward to Boiry-Becquerelle; and practically the whole British line began to move forward to the junction with the French. The 4th Corps on the left cut the Arras-Bapaume road at Ervillers and captured Boiry and Gomicourt with many prisoners. Farther south the troops closed in upon Thiepval, and below the Somme the 32nd Division and the 1st Australians captured Chuignolles and Chuignes after a heavy battle. Over 7,000 prisoners were taken on this day; and the Germans, in many places, began to show the results of the strain under which they were labouring. The line now was becoming uneven. About Thiepval the Germans lay in a dangerous salient. The positions before which the Ulstermen had fought in vain on the opening day of the First Battle of the Somme were now being approached from three sides, and on the morrow Thiepval fell. It was almost cut off, and the troops coming down upon it from the direction of Pozières found little resistance as they converged on it with the 38th Division, who had crossed the Ancre nearly up to their necks in water under the German guns. The front of attack was once more extended to the north. Miraumont at length fell, after a stubborn resistance of over three days, and the 42nd Division marched through Pys on Irles. To the north the Guards seized St. Leger, and the 56th Division Croisilles to the north-east, the two divisions driving a deep salient into the German lines. On their left the 52nd Division, heavily engaged on the Cojeul stream, captured St. Martin and Henin. Above Bapaume the troops were on the outskirts of Mory, Behagnies, and Sapignies. Bapaume was clearly doomed; but it was held with great skill and resolution, as the Germans clearly realised how much would fall with it. The 25th saw the troops pressing nearer to Bapaume from the south, advancing in the Somme area and making progress east of Soissons. During the night the British aeroplanes were again active far behind the front, at Frankfort and Mannheim, where, despite the anti-aircraft defences, the airmen descended so low as to imperil their own safety by nearing the buildings.

But on the 26th yet another British army entered the battle, and there were important successes over the whole line of battle. Attacking astride the Scarpe with the 51st Highland Division above and the 2nd Canadians below, the 1st Army at once leaped forward. We have already seen how the Canadians had perfected their plans for the capture of Orange Hill as a feint when the scheme of the Battle of Amiens was being prepared. They now used them to good purpose. While the Highlanders were attacking Rœux and the formidable chemical works, the 2nd Canadians stormed Orange Hill, Monchy, and Wancourt. A heavy downfall of rain turned the ground into mud, but the troops who had broken into the centre of the 2nd German Army below the Somme were irresistible and carried their objectives with complete ease. On their right the 3rd Army advanced east of Croisilles.



The New Zealanders pressed in upon Bapaume while, in fierce fighting, the troops were reconquering those positions which had caused the army such heavy losses in the First Battle of the Somme. Welsh troops conquered Bazentin-le-Grand. Longueval and High Wood yielded to the British once more, though the latter changed hands twice under German counter-attacks before it was finally won. Suzanne (east of Bray) to the north and Cappy to the south of the Somme were occupied.



The Last Battle of Arras.

Débeney entered Roye in the evening, and the Americans entered Bazoches, north of the Vesle. In the last six days the British alone had captured over 21,000 prisoners.

The combined pressure of the British 4th and French 1st Armies began to yield further results on the 27th. Roye had been closely beset for ten days before it fell, but now the Germans withdrew between Chaulnes and Noyon, leaving behind strong rearguards who delivered heavy counter-attacks to check the advance. The 1st Army captured Gavrelle, Rœux, Vis-en-Artois, and Chérisy. The 3rd Army found

the Prussian Guard now at Bapaume, and the advance became slower. On the following day the Allies entered Chaulnes and Nesle, and the French advance guards approached the line of the Somme-Canal du Nord. The 1917 line had not proved tenable, largely owing to the converging attacks of the 1st, 3rd, and 10th French Armies. Noyon was almost surrounded, and on the 29th it, too, was abandoned. Between the Sensée and the Ailette the whole German line fell back, under continued pressure. Bapaume was occupied by the New Zealanders. Ham, north of the Somme, was captured. Noyon, which had been yielded, was carefully reduced to ruin by the German guns. Mangin crossed the Ailette north of the Coucy road and pressed eastward. Far away to the north the Germans yielded still more of the ground won in the Battle of the Lys. Kemmel, a sort of outlook tower over the area so ardently desired but never won, was reoccupied with Bailleul, Lestrem, and the line of the Lawe. The chief concern of the Germans, now, was to get back to a line which they could hold against the attacks which they foresaw. There was, of course, the grave disadvantage that if such lines were to be broken final defeat became more imminent. But Ludendorff, whose formula to conceal the precarious character of the military situation while pressing for immediate peace was that "the enemy cannot now be made to ask for peace," knew what grave possibilities the future held; and his one hope was that, on the organised defences of the Siegfried Line and its supports, the attack could be made to suffer such losses that it would not be pursued.

On the 30th the Canadians captured but could not retain Bullecourt. Below Péronne the 4th Army crossed the Somme. Débeney's troops advanced east of the Canal du Nord above Noyon, while Mangin pressed in upon Crouy, north-east of Soissons; and the new line began to waver at once. A glance at the map will show how greatly the line had changed during the preceding six weeks. We may conceive the second phase of the Battle of Picardy to end here. It was marked by two great thrusts, which we have called the battles of Noyon and Bapaume. The first carried the French up to the Oise and the Ailette, and the second forced the German front between Arras and the Somme. The many battles which made up the Battle of Bapaume were fought with the old courage of the British army and with a new skill. They had learned their lesson, and the total of prisoners captured during August—nearly 60,000, with almost 700 guns—marks the difference between these and the earlier British battles. Since their counter-attack at Soissons the French had taken over 70,000 prisoners and over 1,400 guns. Such losses could not be endured by any army without some failure in *moral*; and under these fierce and continued blows the purpose of the German Staff changed gradually from the desire to occupy an easily defensible line to the desire to disengage sufficiently to get back to it.

**The Third Phase.**—The main actions of the third phase were fought in three days. They carried the 10th French Army to the continuation of the Siegfried Line (the Alberich Line), and the 1st British Army across the junction of the Wotan Line (or Drocourt-Quéant Switch Line) and the Siegfried Line. Swift and brilliant actions, both of them, they passed almost too quickly for the spectator to note the magnitude of the effect they produced. It was on 29th August that Mangin first set foot on the eastern bank of the Ailette; but he secured only an uneasy foothold about Champs, and it was not until the 30th that he occupied the village. The crossing under the fire of the German guns was one of the great feats of the battle, and the bridgehead once established was rapidly extended and the troops advanced eastward upon Coucy-le-Château. The resistance on this part of the front was very determined. The



French were approaching the main German defensive positions—the Alberich Line. But in fiercely contested actions Mangin forced his way eastward. At the same time he was pushing his front eastward below the Ailette with the assistance of an American



Sketch Map showing the Ground regained by the Allies up to the End of August 1918.

division railed up from Belfort. The Americans on the 29th, by an enveloping movement, seized the small wooded hill on which Juvigny lies. They made up for their lack of tactical skill by courage and determination. At one point in the continued fighting a battery even pushed through the infantry line, and the gunners found themselves

committed to an attack upon the German machine guns. But the troops elbowed their way eastwards, and on 2nd September had cut the Soissons-Chaunoy road and captured Terno-Sorny. Their tanks and unarmoured machine-gun motor batteries had wrought heavy damage, and they assisted Mangin in pointing his thrust towards the rear of the Chemin des Dames. The Germans, retiring slowly before him, could not allow this threat to mature, and he made his way with the greatest difficulty. But on the day that the Americans captured Terno he occupied Leuilly, and on 4th September he was on the fringes of Coucy-le-Château and Jumencourt.

Mangin's thrust in this sector of the front threatened the main pivot of the Western front—the St. Gobain *massif*. This confused tangle of woods and hills was almost invulnerable to direct attack ; and from the south, with the exception of the road to Laon, this great defensive feature is covered by ridges which mask its flank almost as far as the north of Reims. Mangin had been pressing against the narrow gateway of the Laon road, but had made very little headway. It was but a narrow gate and could easily be held ; and while it was held the Allies could not capture this pivot of the defence from the south. There was no way by which an army could force the northern flank below the Oise ; and hence the formidable nature of this centre of defence. All that Mangin could hope to do with the resources available to him was to push back the Germans on to their main defensive line. Foch, appreciating the situation fully, determined to strike to the north and far to the east of the point where the defences, elaborate and highly organised as they were, yet offered chances to resolute and resourceful generals. But the Germans were to be pinned to their chosen position on the St. Gobain *massif* with its necessary implication of a steadfast defence in the north. A withdrawal here would at one point place the pivot and its garrison in grave danger. It was the centre and left centre of the Western front which saw the greatest changes during the next few days.

**Péronne.**—It was while Mangin was developing his threat to the pivot of the line that the Australians carried out a brilliant and important operation which aimed at turning the Somme line. The old defences in this area occupied a unique place in the minds of the British and French armies. East of Clery they were so intricate that they seemed almost invincible. From the Somme, east of Clery, to the Tortille (and the Canal du Nord which follows it) they formed a dense belt covering Péronne from the north. The Somme River fills a marshy area which, with the canal, constituted a very great obstacle to the advance ; and when the Australians reached the river opposite Clery and Halle on 29th August, they seemed to have come to the end of their pursuit. But the troops immediately began to seek for crossings, and it was decided to concentrate upon the capture of the dominating hill, Mont St. Quentin. The first plan had been to cross the river below Clery ; but as the bridge was constantly destroyed by shell-fire, the 2nd Division marched back, crossed west of Clery, and advanced upon it from the north. By noon on the 30th the troops were in position. At 5 A.M. on the following day the 5th Brigade, with the 10th and 9th operating on its left, advanced to the attack as the 14th and 15th moved against Péronne. The troops fought their way forward against a heavy machine-gun fire and a sustained shelling from the German gunners, firing point blank. The 5th Brigade had to face uncut wire on its right, but on the left the men got into the German trenches and moved swiftly up them and up the hill slopes, where they stood all day against the continued counter-attacks of a numerically superior force. The brigade alone took 800 prisoners, but the battalion which captured this terrible hill



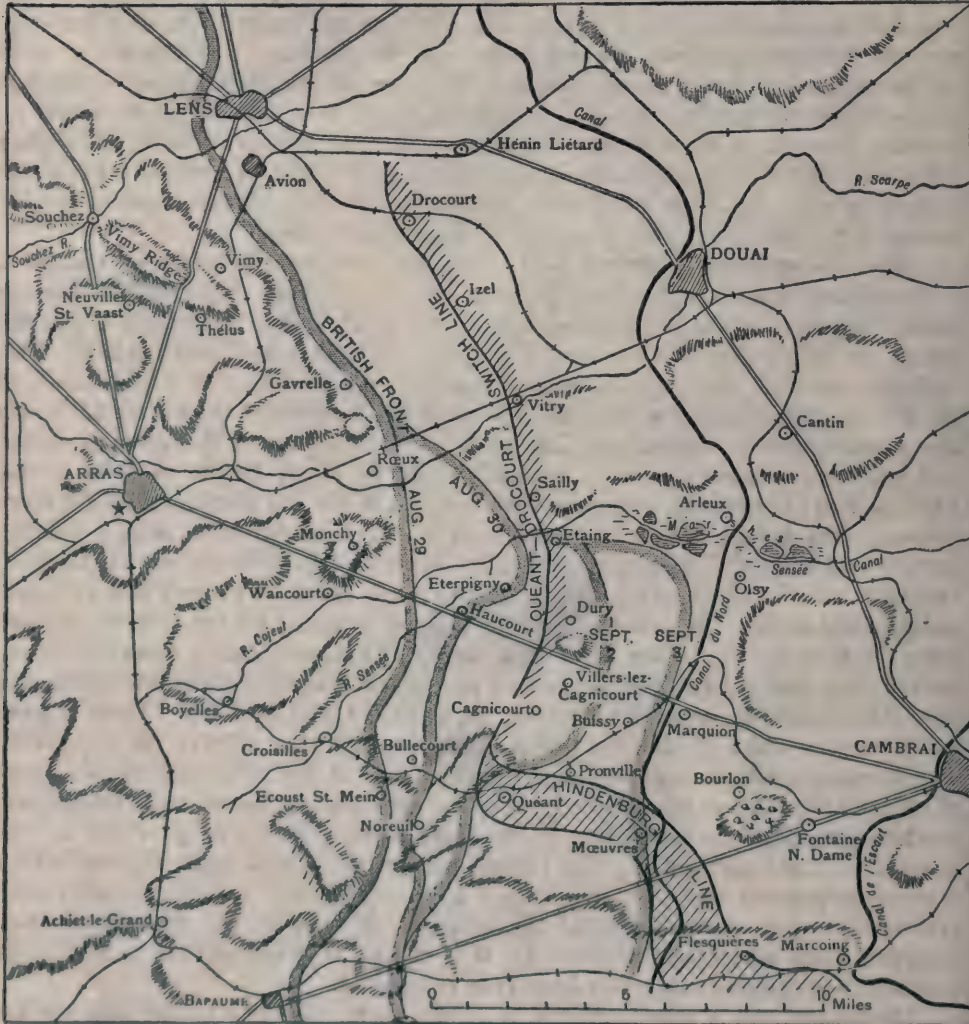
came out of the line that night 83 strong. During the night the Germans pushed the small body of Australians half-way down the hill. Reinforcements, coming along the Cléry road, found their only avenue of approach swept by fire. The men fought their way forward once more; and about 2 P.M. on the 1st September the 6th Brigade rushed the hill and established their line well to the east. Péronne was doomed, and the Australians at once began to enter it from the north; and the British who had supported the attack entered Bouchavesnes and Sailly. The next few days saw the Germans gradually pushed back from the Somme. The capture of Mont St. Quentin, which led to the occupation of Péronne, was one of the fiercest encounters of the Battle of Picardy. The 2nd Guard troops had been brought up to defend it; but the Australians broke down all resistance, despite the low strength of all their units, and they well deserved Rawlinson's verdict: "a feat of arms worthy of the highest praise . . . I am filled with admiration for the gallantry and surpassing daring of the 2nd Division in winning this important fortress."

**The Drocourt-Quéant Switch Line.**—Yet this was but an incident, though a very brilliant incident, of the third phase of the great battle. An operation of much greater importance was then taking place in the north, where the British troops lay before the Switch Line which covered Douai, east of Arras, to the Siegfried Line. This sector of the front was very strong, and manned by a considerable concentration of troops. Its importance was that the capture of the junction of the Switch Line with the main Siegfried (or Hindenburg) Line would place the captors in the rear of the latter, and whatever defensive value it retained would no longer be due to it as a line. The function of lines is to economise troops, which in the end sustain every defensive feature. The British troops had now been heavily engaged for almost a month; and the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions, like many British divisions, were exhausted. Indeed it is one of the most wonderful features of the Battle of Picardy that the same troops could keep up the constant fighting and yet be ready for the general offensive when the hour struck. They had fought their way against a heavy resistance to the Switch Line, and yet the British generals proposed to cut through at one stroke, not only this formidable system of defences, but also the Canal du Nord. There is some fire in victory which kindles the spirits of men so that they achieve the impossible. The German positions represented "the last word in military engineering—years of systematic and intensive labour. Barbed wire entanglements were formidable, machine-gun positions innumerable, and large tunnels had been provided for the protection of the garrison."\* The defences constituted dense belts, through which it seems impossible that man should ever have penetrated; and the trenches were criss-crossed and multiplied until the imagination reels at the thought of their conquest when adequately garrisoned. It is certain that without the assistance of tanks such a system could never have been conquered.

The 1st and 3rd Armies combined to reduce them. Horne's troops were the 1st and 4th Divisions of the Canadian Corps and the 4th British Division, while Byng allocated to the task the 52nd Lowland Scots (from Palestine), the 57th West Lancs., and the 63rd (Naval) Divisions. But the 4th Division was exhausted by the engagements necessary to carry it to the line, and the 4th Canadian Division had to extend its front over that previously held by the British troops. The Germans had discovered what was afoot, and during the afternoon and evening of 1st September they delivered a number of attacks upon the Canadians up to the beginning of the advance.

\* Canadian Official Report.

At 5 A.M. on 2nd September the troops began to advance on a front of four and a half miles stretching below Quéant, where the switch joined the main line. They were assisted by forty tanks, Brutinel's Motor Machine-gun Brigade, and the 10th Hussars. Following a dense barrage, the troops rapidly seized the first and support line, including the village of Dury and the hill which from a height of about 100 feet looks



The Break through the Quéant-Drocourt "Switch" of the Hindenburg Line (Sept. 2 and 3).

down on the flat ground up to the towers of Douai. The attack again proved a complete surprise, and the town major was taken in his bed at Dury at 8 A.M. There was bitter fighting on the hill, where the men suffered much from the machine-gun fire from the reverse slopes. But to this point the progress had been rapid; and it slowed down now because the field artillery barrage being shot away, the defence



began to recover. The flat open country was swept by machine-gun fire, and the tanks were gradually knocked out by the German gunners, firing over open sights. The left and centre swung forward, while their flank, taken from the north by a well-directed fire, was held up. But the right covered and, assisted by the fierce attack of the Lowlanders and the Lancashire men, continued to go forward. Brutinel's Brigade with the 10th Hussars attempted to force their way through to the Marquion bridge over the canal; but they were compelled to keep to the Arras-Cambrai road by the dense belts of uncut wire, the frequent trenches and sunken roads; and the road was swept by a machine-gun fire and artillery barrage which effectually blocked it.

Nevertheless the 1st Canadian Division on the right forced its way forward, captured Cagnicourt, the Bois de Bouche, and Bois de Loison to the east of it; and the Naval brigades, who had been on the heels of the 1st Canadians, went through the breach of the line and turned south on Quéant. What a world of difference in this finished work and that fumbling with fractured defences which had marked the earlier stages of the war! Later in the day the 1st Canadians captured the small switch line near Buissy up to the outskirts of the village. By this development they outflanked the Germans standing in front of the 4th Division, and compelled them to withdraw behind the canal during the night. By this time the Naval brigades were east of Quéant and had cut the Douai railway, while the Lowlanders had turned Quéant from the north, and were in front of Pronville. Along the Cambrai road the troops had advanced some three miles, and there were 8,000 prisoners captured. The Drocourt-Quéant line had been breached, and the two Canadian divisions of war-worn troops had conquered eight fresh German divisions specially brought up to defend this vital sector of the front. Of the prisoners some 5,000 were taken by the two weak Canadian divisions. Quéant and Pronville were entered during the night by the Naval brigades, and when the patrols were pushed forward the next morning they were able to capture a string of villages and establish themselves just west of the canal. The Germans had had another severe lesson, and they withdrew, leaving the British to advance to Inchy and Mœuvres. The bridges on the canal had been blown up, and from the commanding positions on the east bank the Germans stood ready with a multitude of machine guns. The 4th Division had seized Etaing during the night, and the British now held a pronounced salient in the German lines covered by a strong water barrier.

The capture of this immensely strong defensive feature in a day's fierce fighting had its effect over the whole of the battle line. Places which had defied the troops for years began to yield. In the Lys area Richebourg St. Vaast was occupied, and the troops entered the western outskirts of Lens. Progress was made east of Beaumetz and Ytres, facing the old Cambrai battleground. Débeney crossed the Somme. Humbert began to traverse the road to Guiscard. On the 4th he had reached that town, with his right on the Oise, at Apilly. Far to the south Mangin was entering Coucy and Pierremande, and his thrust eastwards enabled the Americans to cross the Vesle and occupy Condé, with its fort, and Vieil Arcy. On the far north Neuve Chapelle and Fauquissart were recovered, and even Plumer was able to advance. On the 6th Byng had reached Havrincourt Wood. Rawlinson, keeping pace on his right, was six miles east of Péronne. Débeney took Ham. Humbert not only took Tergnier, one of the most important junctions on the whole front, and occupied the west bank of the St. Quentin Canal, but also crossed it at St. Simon. And Mangin

drew in his line more straitly about the St. Gobain *massif*. The following day Byng had captured part of the Havrincourt Wood and Rawlinson was in Roisel. What would the Allies have given earlier in the war to have achieved such advances! On 8th September Mangin was fiercely engaged about Laffaux. But by this time the Germans were making their way as best they could back to the Hindenburg defences, and seeking wherever possible to put a river-line between them and the Allies. They had learned the lesson of the tank, and had seen first one and then another mode of defence fail. They felt at this point that water was a good defence against the tank; but captured orders show a great bewilderment. It will be remembered that the latest form of defence had been the holding of advanced positions weakly; but orders captured after these battles pointed out that this led to the too easy surrendering of such positions. The Germans were beginning to lose *moral*. But even Ludendorff was glad to write off territory very easily now, and the armies were in full retreat, covered by resolute rearguards. Already the Allies were practically back to the starting-point of Ludendorff's great offensive. Byng was past this point by an amount which cannot be measured by mere mileage. The Drocourt-Quéant line was the last development of German military art. If they could not hold such positions they could hold none at all. On the night of the 11th September the Germans lay along the Canal du Nord to Havrincourt, and to the south they occupied the Hindenburg Line and its continuations, with advanced positions at Havrincourt and Epéhy. They had no intention of evacuating positions of such natural strength. Their retreat had shaken out folds in the line and shortened it by some sixty or seventy miles, which enabled them to withdraw between twenty and thirty divisions into reserve.

On 12th September Byng's 4th and 6th Corps came into contact with these out-works of the Siegfried Line, and the 2nd, 62nd, 37th, and New Zealand Divisions, who had fought their way back across the scene of the March defeat, attacked the Havrincourt-Trescault sector. The positions formed a sort of bridgehead over the Siegfried Line, and they had been newly fortified. Double rows of rifle pits, garrisoned by picked machine gunners, marked the fringes of the wood below Havrincourt. By nightfall the Yorkshire troops of the 62nd Division had captured Havrincourt, and the Rifle Brigade and 60th Rifles of the 37th had seized Trescault. The Rifles swept through the north-east corner of the wood, and the New Zealanders passed it on the south, leaving the garrisons of the rifle pits virtually enveloped. During the night they withdrew, and the three divisions formed up on the next morning for an attack between Havrincourt and Gouzeaucourt. The Germans had been ordered to hold on to the positions, but the 62nd, after a fierce struggle, seized the Havrincourt heights, and were able to look down on the surrounding country up to the ill-fated Bourlon Wood. Meanwhile the New Zealanders had worked their way forward, and at nightfall were in possession of Gouzeaucourt Wood. The men were beginning to organise their positions when the Germans counter-attacked in force. But the 62nd and 37th Divisions inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans and retained the ground they had won; and the positions were then consolidated.

It was on the 12th also that Mangin, holding firmly to the front Barisis-Bassoles, at the foot of the St. Gobain hill, pushed his right up between the Ailette and the Aisne, astride the Laon road. It was one of the critical parts of the front, the only weak point on the south of the St. Gobain *massif*; and the Germans reacted violently. Mangin gained ground at Nanteuil-la-Fosse, south of the road, despite the furious



counter-attacks ; and also about Laffaux, north of the road. And on the following day he was able to seize Laffaux hill, with its clear view over the road up to Laon ; and to extend his advance east of Sancy, south of the road, and north of Celles-sur-Aisne. Below the river the Americans maintained their progress. On the 14th Mangin captured the plateau east of Vauxaillon and the ridge north of Celles, and thereby established his positions astride the Laon road. On the following day he found his progress challenged by repeated counter-attacks ; but after checking these by machine-gun and artillery fire, he passed east of Allemant (to the north) and Jouy and Sancy (to the south), and captured the Mont-des-Singes, which, from the north-east of Vauxaillon, dominates the Ailette valley. He thus completed another stage in his approach to the vital gap south of St. Gobain, and came within striking distance of Laon. These arduous battles, which tried the strength of the attack at least as much as the defence, were of the highest importance. They seemed only to creep forward ; but the advance was continuous, and the sapping of the strength of this formidable pivot of the line was a necessary prelude to the general offensive.

**St. Mihiel.**—But already the world's interest had turned to the eastern sector of the line, where the 1st American Army was making its *début* as a Continental army, and measuring its strength against the enemy for the first time as an army. The people of the United States very naturally regarded this action with peculiar pride. It was the first time that the Americans had carried out an action for themselves. It was not, as some of them seemed to think, the recognition that they had honourably passed through their novitiate. Wherever troops who are not perfectly trained met the German armies they learned the fact to their cost. For two years the British armies had dearly bought their experience in heavy casualties, and only now, in the fourth year, were they becoming so seasoned that their natural courage and initiative could be allowed full play without exposing them to unnecessary risk. The Americans paid very heavily for their inexperience ; but in this their first action they suffered only slightly, and the reason was that the Germans were on the point of doing voluntarily what the Allies had determined to make them do under force. A day or two's delay, and the trap might have sprung without disturbing the German command. Ludendorff's decision to evacuate the salient is but another evidence of the exhaustion of his reserves and the decline of his force. It was of the first importance to retain the St. Mihiel salient, not only as an offensive measure, but even for the maintenance of a strong defensive. The St. Mihiel bridge-head enabled the Germans to hold the main railway line from Paris under fire, and actually occupied over 1,000 yards of the branch line which ran up the Meuse to Verdun. The other source of supply for the Verdun sector, by means of the Châlons branch of the railway, was under long-range fire. The St. Mihiel salient, therefore, seriously weakened the Verdun sector and the line below it. In times of crisis a few hours make the difference between victory and defeat ; and by compelling the French to send supplies and reinforcements to the Toul-Nancy-Belfort sector and to Verdun by roundabout routes the Germans put the French at a great disadvantage as to time. It was for this reason that, in the Battle of Verdun, the troops had to depend upon a highly organised system of motor transport ; and this weakness was one of the reasons which conditioned the choice of Verdun as the sector for the Crown Prince's attack.

The other reason was that Verdun was, as one of the German generals expressed it, the " postern gate " of France. Nowhere else did the Allies lie so near the vital

communications of the enemy. One indispensable requirement of troops holding an extended front is good *lateral* communications, by means of which troops and supplies can be concentrated against any one sector either for offence or defence. The main lateral communications ran through Lille, Valenciennes, Hirson, Mezières, Longuyon, Thionville, and Metz; but though the Allies lay near Lille, the hinterland in that neighbourhood was admirably supplied by the Belgian railway system. Eastward from Longuyon the lines from the main German bases were available; but at Longuyon itself the lateral communications ran in front of the great buttress of the wooded Ardennes, and if this station could be brought under fire the western German armies would be virtually cut off from the eastern. If the front on either side were to be subjected to the critical strain of a heavy attack, the Germans would



The Battle of St. Mihiel.

not be able to move across with sufficient rapidity to avoid defeat. All such statements are only approximations to the truth, since in times of crisis, when the abnormal becomes the rule, versatile leaders can makeshift for a time. But the grave weakening of such a blow is obvious beyond the need of proof; and, well aware of the condition of things, only an army in considerable straits for reserves could have contemplated a retirement which involved the advance of the enemy to within striking distance of the lateral communications. A further and compelling motive for a stern stand on this sector was that it looked north to the Briey basin, whence Germany drew 80 per cent. of her steel. The duration of the war was largely conditioned by her possession of this area, which provided her with one of the most essential war materials.



Yet despite these inconvenient effects, Ludendorff had determined to retire, and he had arranged to withdraw on the 12th. Foch had full knowledge of his opponent's plan, and struck before it could be carried out. The forty-mile front of the salient was held on the 12th by six weak divisions (about 50,000 men), and two Austro-Hungarian divisions lay in immediate reserve. Pershing's 1st Army had on the southern sector of the salient the 1st, 2nd, 42nd, 5th, 89th, and 90th Divisions, and two divisions in reserve at Pont-à-Mousson. As an American division at full strength includes some 30,000 men, it will be seen how overwhelming were the forces of the Allies, without counting the French troops who struck at the nose of the salient, at St. Mihiel, and the French who assisted the Americans on the northern side of the salient. The Allies had a heavy concentration of artillery and about 1,000 tanks. Such a disproportion in the opposing forces had never occurred before on so extensive a front. The chief concentration was on the south side of the salient, where the principal attack was to be delivered. There the ground was suitable for the deployment of vast forces and for the use of tanks. The position had been fortified by that unwearied patience and skill which the Allies had discovered to be characteristic of the Germans. On the western side the line had been drawn in a direction running from north-east to south-west across the Meuse heights, where it was difficult for large bodies of troops to operate; and the whole position, being so strong, had never been seriously challenged. The French took care to make it almost impossible to debouch from the salient, though the imagination still fails to find any adequate explanation of the failure of the Germans to attack from it at the opening of the Verdun battle. And from the Allied point of view it was unnecessary and unprofitable to clear the salient while the Germans were lying near the heart of France with ample reserves.

The conditions now were drastically changed; and it was in the midst of the confusion incident on withdrawal that the Allied guns began to thunder at 1 A.M. on 12th September. The Germans, expecting what was coming, at once began to withdraw. But the roads by which they could retire converge upon Vigneulles and Hattonchâtel, and the artillery was trained upon these centres, and indeed swept the whole salient. Four hours after the opening of the bombardment the Americans began to advance, on a twelve-mile front, between Fey and Xivray, and they went forward behind the barrage and the tanks, swiftly and vigorously, breaking down all resistance. By night they had achieved nearly all their objectives. The villages where the Germans attempted to stand were cleared by tanks. Thiaucourt was taken; Pannes, Hendicourt, and Nonsard were occupied, and the cavalry reached the main road and moved towards Vigneulles. The northern attack started at six o'clock, and the French and American troops established themselves on the Meuse heights in one fierce rush. The ground was heavily wired, machine guns lay in the thick undergrowth, and there were numerous steel and concrete "pill-boxes." The advance here was on a narrower front. Combres fell very early despite a heavy resistance, and the troops captured a string of villages including Hattonchâtel, and during the night the 26th Division reached the western edge of Vigneulles, on the eastern edge of the heights. Meanwhile the French had wiped out the bridgehead and were in possession of St. Mihiel by night. At this point the converging attack had almost blocked the salient. Through a precarious four miles the Germans made their escape as best they could. At 9 A.M. the next morning the troops had joined hands across the salient; and while some began to clear up

the salient, the others turned outwards, and by nightfall had established a line between Pagny and Fresnes. Within the salient some 15,000 prisoners were taken, and over 100 guns. One regiment with its commander and staff was taken entire; and there were several hundreds of men belonging to the 35th Austro-Hungarian Division. There were tons of ammunition and war material; and the luxurious dug-outs excited as much surprise as the all too common evidences of looting. Almost every scrap of metal had been taken away, and from St. Mihiel every male between the ages of sixteen and forty-five years had been removed. But the women and children gave a hearty welcome to Pétain, Pershing, and the American Secretary for War, Mr. Baker, when they entered the town a few hours after its capture.

On the night of the 12th the Independent Air Force assisted the operations by heavily bombarding the Metz railway at the Sablons junction, at Courcelles, and at Metz station; and, descending low, put searchlights out of action and brought transport to a standstill by machine-gun fire. The following night they carried out another similar raid. On the 14th the Americans checked the counter-attacks, and continued their advance over the thirty-mile front across the base of the salient. On the following day they advanced their front west of the Moselle by the capture of Nomeny, and for the first time came under the fire of the Metz guns. Heavy guns, moved up from Toul, returned this fire on the 16th, and the Americans again advanced their line about the Moselle, despite a heavy bombardment with gas shells. But the defence had now stiffened, and with the exception of a few local gains on the 17th the sector sank to an uneasy rest. Pershing's troops had done their work cleanly and efficiently. The staff work was of a high order; and it was due to this that so many men were cut off. It was not Foch's purpose to exploit the success farther in this direction. The Americans were destined to take part in the general offensive. But the direction of their attack was to be north. Without the success at St. Mihiel the operation planned by Foch could not have been undertaken well or even safely. The Allies were now able to attack either towards the north or towards the east with equal facility. Their communications were vastly improved both for offence and defence; and the Allied front was now less than fourteen miles from Longuyon, and less than eight from Conflans, which lay on the nearest switch between Longuyon and Metz. The Battle of St. Mihiel was one of the most profitable victories won by the Allies. The losses were very small. A French cavalry division which cut off 2,500 prisoners sustained a total loss of four men. The total casualties suffered by the American army from its first entrance into the Western battle up to 18th September were only 31,683—10,317 dead, 17,081 wounded, 4,285 missing and prisoners. When we remember that the fierce and as yet largely undisciplined courage had caused the Americans to suffer very heavy casualties on the sector about Château-Thierry, we must reckon St. Mihiel among the most economical victories.

**The Siegfried Approaches.**—Ludendorff's plan to hold the Siegfried Line, covered from below the Scarpe to about Mœuvres by the flooded floor of the Agache valley, and below Honnecourt by the Scheldt and St. Quentin Canal, was skilfully conceived. It was not ideal, since there were gaps in the water defence which alone could stop the advance of tanks. Between Mœuvres and Honnecourt there existed a gap of seven or eight miles, and south of Vendhuile the canal ran through a tunnel. At both places the defence had to rely on the elaborate fortifications which had fallen time after time to the new attack by tanks. In any case the Siegfried system

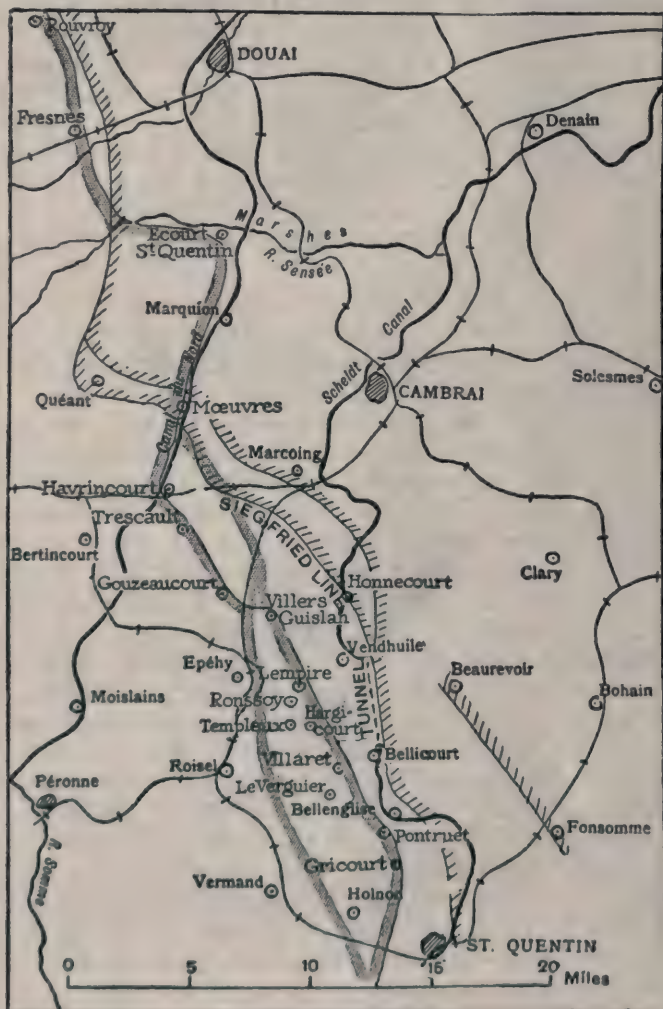


could not be relied upon unless the tactics used by Gouraud in Champagne could be adopted. The defensive in depth, with its deep outpost zones and front lines standing in advance of the main line, was the only method which had proved at all effective. We have seen how anxious Ludendorff was about the proper use of this system of defence. He had called the attention of his subordinate commanders to the necessity of contesting the outpost positions, fearing that the growing conviction of the garrisons as to the hopelessness of their condition, with its consequent easy abandonment of the zone, might spread to a point at which the tactics would prove not only useless, but even a quite unnecessary sacrifice of men. Unless the positions were thoroughly contested, the force of the attack would not be broken, and the assault would arrive before the main line in full vigour. On the other hand, if the attacking force could be detained in the outpost zone for some time, there would be full opportunity for putting tanks out of action and for weakening the storming lines. The point was fully appreciated by both sides, and on 18th September the 3rd and 4th British and 1st French Armies advanced to the assault on the outer defences of the Siegfried Line.

The 3rd and 4th Armies attacked on the seventeen miles sector between Gouzeaucourt and Holnon. Over a considerable part of this front the outer defences consisted of three elaborate lines. The old British front and support lines were now manned by the Germans, and formed a formidable obstacle to the advance. And beyond them lay the front Siegfried Line, about a mile west of the canal, running along high ground giving good observation to the west. The aim of the attack was to capture the whole of these defences and secure the advantage of observation from the ridge on the main Siegfried position, which lay on lower ground. The Germans had been working with feverish haste on these defences, and the Staff might have viewed the coming battle with confidence if they had not seen such elaborate positions as the Wotan Line fall, for the troops who advanced to the attack had been almost continually engaged for nearly six weeks. The attack began, after a few minutes of intense bombardment, about five o'clock in the morning. Rain had begun to fall heavily three hours before, and it did not cease till about seven. But despite the slippery ground and a thick mist the attack was immediately successful. The resistance about Epéhy was not completely broken until nightfall; but farther south the 74th Yeomanry Division from Palestine cleared the Templeux quarries, passed through Ronssoy, and reached Lempire, taking prisoners from the 2nd Guard and 38th Divisions. At one part of the battle they found themselves spectators at an encounter battle on their left. The British advancing met the Germans counter-attacking. The Yeomanry seized the opportunity, and poured so fierce an enfilade fire into the Germans that only a thin fringe of the enemy succeeded in regaining their line. On the right of the Yeomanry, the Australians, as daring and persistent as ever, but past masters now in the tactics of infiltration, broke through the three lines, and in the evening were established over the whole of the front on the ridge upon which lay the German front line. The old British support line, lying between Hargicourt and Le Verguier, was quickly overrun, though there was heavy fighting about Grand Priel Wood, midway between the villages. After a short pause the former British front line, which ran through Villaret, was occupied, and the final objectives were reached by the afternoon except on the flanks. The southern flank was cleared by a local spurt at eleven o'clock at night. It was typical of the battle that for slight losses the troops not only reached their distant objectives,

but also captured numerous prisoners. The Australians, for a total casualty list of 1,186, captured 104 officers and 4,044 men from four divisions.

Byng's army had but little share in the advance, but it was called upon to bear the brunt of a heavy counter-attack in the afternoon. By this time the Germans had seen how the battle was going, and they made a resolute attempt to check the advance. The counter-attack was delivered on the northern flank of the advance,



The Siegfried Positions.

between Gouzeaucourt and Mœuvres, at about 5 P.M. The Guards, 3rd, and 37th Divisions completely repulsed the Germans with heavy loss; and the German blow achieved nothing.

Below the Australians, the German resistance was very determined. About Holnon Wood the Germans had shelled with great persistency during the night, and the area was filled with the fumes of gas as the men advanced. But they fought



their way to Fresnoy and Pontruet, and conquered the quadrilateral of trenches near Gricourt. On the right of the 4th Army, Débeney pushed his line nearer to St. Quentin, after a severe struggle. He was only 4,000 yards away at the beginning of the battle, and he found his troops involved in heavy fighting. But on the following days the French troops halved their distance from the city by the capture of the Epine de Dallon on the 24th. The attack on that day was assisted by the right wing of Rawlinson's army, who took Selency, which lies not two miles from the northern outskirts of St. Quentin. The city was thus immediately threatened from the west.

To the south-west the French line skirted it and lay on the Oise from Vendeuil (entered on the 23rd) to Travecy, just over a mile from La Fère. The French were on this sector close in to the main defensive line. Farther south Mangin had beaten off five heavy attacks, on the night of the 19th, on the part of his line which threatened the western end of the Chemin des Dames. On the British front the fighting was breaking out in little gusts. On the 19th, further progress had been made north of Gauche Wood; and after a struggle involving many vicissitudes, Mœuvres was at length finally cleared and retained. When the troops finally mastered that place they were able to relieve a little band who had held out for forty-eight hours in the midst of the Germans. They were a corporal and six men of the 1/5th Battalion Highland Light Infantry, who had been holding an outpost north of the village when the Germans recaptured Mœuvres and surrounded them. They had only iron rations with them; but, hungry and wet, they fought on until the advance on the 19th restored them to their unit. On the following day there was heavy fighting about Epéhy, but by nightfall the area as far as Lempire had been thoroughly cleared and organised. Farther south the troops had pushed their line to the east of Gricourt. The 1st Army struck on this day between Rouvroy, south-east of Lens, and Fresnes, north of the Douai railway, and made considerable progress. There was also a useful little advance north-west of La Bassée.

In the battle of the 18th, fifteen British divisions defeated twenty German divisions and captured 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns. Of the guns, eighty were captured by the Australians in their brilliant and impetuous dash across the three defensive lines. Over the whole of the front attacked there were evidences that the Germans had made extensive preparations for a long stay in their positions, and the fierce fighting about Mœuvres and Havrincourt shows how reluctant they were to abandon their design. About the latter place much material was captured, including large stores of wines, liqueurs, and cigarettes; and there were even postal packets containing cakes and sausages. There were many responsible critics in the Allied countries who doubted whether the Allies, so severely tried by the almost incessant fighting of nearly seven weeks, would be able to force the elaborately fortified defensive belt which the Germans now held. But with these last engagements the Allies had carried the advanced defences of the Hindenburg positions between Cambrai and St. Quentin, and had thus gained their base of departure for the general offensive. There were considerable readjustments of the forces during the last few days. The Canadians extended their right almost as far as Mœuvres, to the left of the 3rd Army. Major-General E. M. Lewis's 30th American Division ("Wild Cat") and Major-General J. F. O'Ryan's 27th (New York) Division had quietly taken over the Australian positions after these had been consolidated. Degoutte's army had been moved up north to Belgium. And all was being made

ready for the decisive battle. The East had waked to renewed activity. Franchet d'Esperey had struck in the Balkans, on the 12th, a blow which was to drive the first of the enemy Powers to secede from the Alliance. A week later Allenby had begun to move in that campaign which was to sweep across Syria.

The great Battle of Picardy had come to an end after reconquering almost all the territory which the enemy had taken in 1918. The German armies were wearied and incapable of a counter-offensive. Their great and imperative need was a space in which to rest, reorganise, and reconstitute their reserves. From the beginning of the Second Battle of the Marne until the present date the Germans had engaged 163 divisions, 75 of them two or three times. There were now only 68 divisions in reserve, and of these only 21 were fresh. The front had been shortened by about 120 miles, yet the same number of divisions had to be kept in line because of the reduction in their strength and *moral*. Sixteen divisions had been broken up to keep the effectives of the other divisions up to strength. Yet we find the German Chancellor addressing the Main Committee of the Reichstag on 24th September in words that gave little indication of the gravity of the situation. The last big offensive had not brought the success hoped for, and the situation was grave, but worse times had been passed. The enemy's premature cries of victory would soon pass away. It was, as ever, a war of defence. But behind this bold façade the whole edifice of the enemy was falling asunder. Ludendorff had insisted to the Foreign Secretary, on 14th August, that they must have a speedy peace, and Hintze promised to take appropriate measures. Payer, the Vice-Chancellor, delivered a speech at Stuttgart on 12th September which went as near overtures as the true Prussian could. "Strong and courageous in the consciousness of our invincibility," they would readily enter negotiations. There could, however, be no question of their paying indemnities, but only whether they should receive compensation for the injuries inflicted on them. As the "innocent and attacked party," they had a right to indemnification. But to go on to that point would cost too much, and therefore, even with their "favourable military situation," they were prepared to abandon the idea. He even threw out hints about the restoration of Belgium. But this speech failed even to please Ludendorff, who later complained that throughout September no step was taken to bring about the peace which the army so much needed. It is indeed strange that, with full information of the plight of the army, and with the pressure of G. H. Q. urging them on, the German Government could not think of a less stupid way of opening negotiations.

Three days later the Austro-Hungarian Government, with the full knowledge and approval of Germany, addressed a Note to the belligerent and neutral Powers, and the Holy See, in which they invited delegates from the belligerent states "to a confidential and non-binding discussion on the basic principles for the conclusion of peace" in some neutral country. "Frank and candid explanations on all those points which need to be precisely defined" could be requested and given. America at once replied that her attitude was known beyond all ambiguity. Mr. Balfour took the invitation in connection with Payer's speech, and, pointing out that the German Vice-Chancellor's attitude towards the Brest and Bukarest treaties, towards Belgium, Alsace-Lorraine, and the German Colonies, offered no ground for negotiation, brushed the invitation aside: "It is incredible that anything should come of this proposal." So the enemy lost more than they gained by these manoeuvres. They showed the world how critical their state really was without admitting it



with the "candour" and "honesty" they invited. At this point nothing but complete surrender could be accepted by the Allies; and it is difficult to know, even yet, whether Ludendorff would have accepted that situation, although there is abundant evidence that he knew this would be forced upon him if the Allies continued the battle.

## II. "THE LITTLE RIFT": BULGARIA SURRENDERS.

AMONG the Bulgars the Germans had never been popular, and the Alliance rested upon what was conceived to be a community of interest. Bulgaria, like Serbia, had hopes of an expansion which would give her a dominating position in the Balkans. At first these hopes looked no farther than Macedonia and Kavala; but after Rumania's entry into the war they embraced also the Dobrudja. The last year of the war saw each of these hopes chastened by the cruel materialism of fact. The Treaty of Bukarest set up an Austro-German *condominium* in Northern Dobrudja; and this, with the refusal to allow Bulgaria to establish an administration in the Dobrudja, gradually brought home to people's minds the fact that Bulgaria was regarded by her more powerful allies merely as a vassal state. This unpalatable truth, coming upon the great rise in prices, brought about the fall of the Radoslavov Ministry. The war seemed to have outlived its usefulness.\* The first two years had seen Bulgaria more prosperous than ever; but when the necessities of life became difficult to procure, it seemed to the shrewd instinct of the people that the time had come for reconsideration. They had won more than they had thought possible; but if it was not to be assured to them, how were they better off for continuing the conflict? At the Stockholm Conference, Austrian Socialists urged conciliation with Serbia as regards Macedonia. The same sentiments found a voice, unchecked, in Berlin. Turkey was beginning to raise the question of her northern frontier, and the recall of Venizelos to power in Greece meant that Bulgaria's claim to Kavala would be challenged. On 15th June Malinov succeeded Radoslavov, who had had a longer term of power than any other belligerent premier. Radoslavov was the sacrifice to a widespread dissatisfaction; but Malinov pleased no one except for his known opportunism. He would ride any horse which promised to carry him, and Ferdinand's choice of him signified his desire to be prepared for all emergencies. The opposition clamoured for a peace based on national lines. Ferdinand had begun to see that even that policy might come to be the safest, and he chose as his chief Minister a man who would take it if called upon. As the months passed, Ludendorff's great offensive was seen first to fail, and then to cast the shadow of disaster. The conferences after the Battle of Amiens, when Ludendorff urged upon the German Government the need of immediate peace, and the clumsy efforts of the Germans to secure it, could only strengthen the misgivings which had seized upon the minds of the Bulgars. This was the background against which the Allied offensive was staged, and it conditioned the dramatic development of the battle.

The Salonika army had gone through many vicissitudes. Sarrail had been succeeded by General Guillaumat towards the close of 1917. Guillaumat, who had commanded the 1st Corps in the Battle of the Somme and had been raised to the command of the 2nd Army at Verdun in the following June, was a bold and skilful

\* The Allies knew in May that the Bulgars were ready to cut their losses. By that time they had seen that the Germans were doomed.

general, and his were the dispositions upon which Franchet d'Esperey built his plans for the summer offensive. Franchet d'Esperey had commanded the 5th French Army in the First Battle of the Marne, and the effect of his bold leading has not yet been sufficiently appreciated ; but the fact that it was one of the decisive factors in the Allied victory is now certain. When he assumed command of the Salonika force on 8th June, he entered the one field where the Allies had never secured anything but inconsiderable successes. The recapture of Monastir was the greatest victory secured by the force ; but the town was useless as a base, and only its name was of value. The guns of the enemy still dominated it. The brief moment when a true success might have been secured by a vigorous pursuit had been lost. Franchet d'Esperey's composite force had been deserted by the Russians, but otherwise was as mixed as that with which Sarraïl had failed to cope. The Italians held Albania, and there were Italians west of Monastir. In between were French troops, and there were French divisions also on the right of the Italians. Then came some five divisions of the reconstituted Servian army, including the Yugo-Slav regiments. The front west of the Vardar was held by these troops. On the east of the river lay the five weak British divisions and the divisions of the new Grecian army. What could be expected of such a force? one might have asked. And for every depressing conclusion as to the unproductiveness of this field the Allies could point for confirmation to the long series of abortive attacks already undertaken. In May, while Guillaumat was still in supreme command, the Greek (Seres) Division had won its spurs by a skilful local attack, west of the Vardar, in which 2,000 prisoners were secured. The Albanian line was advanced in July, but withdrawn under Austrian counter-attacks, and by the end of August the Italians were back behind the last defences of Avlona.

But Franchet d'Esperey, ignoring these surface bubbleings, planned a vigorous offensive for the early part of September. In this plan the British, under Milne, with two Greek divisions, were cast for the same inglorious rôle of beating against the almost impregnable positions which confronted them. They were to hold the two Bulgarian armies to their sector and prevent the possibility of reinforcing the critical sector against which the main blow was to be directed. This was the seven-mile mountain sector between Mount Sokol and Mount Vetrenik, a thin fringe of jagged hills which stood in advance of the Tcherná bend. The Serbs, with the French on their left, were to endeavour to carry this sector, and, if successful, to cross the Tcherná and march on Prilep, extending fanwise so as to enlarge the front of advance. In front of them lay the 11th German Army, containing less than two per cent. of German troops, but with a German Staff. The Allied Army was better gunned than ever before, more firmly knit together, and better trained. The first murmurs of the coming storm were heard in mid-August, when the whole front began to tremble under the Allied shells. The Allies had at length secured the supremacy of the air. There were more numerous desertions from the Bulgar ranks ; and, as we have seen, there was a distinct deterioration in Bulgar *moral*. It is *men* who, in the last resort, sustain even the most elaborate defences, and it is the spirit of man which is the deciding factor in war. When that spirit burns clear, men can achieve the impossible. When it begins to waver, either through misgivings as to the justice of the cause or as to the necessity or possibility of resisting any longer, the most formidable defences become of as little account as the weakest. The Allies found the Salonika front already undermined in this fashion.



In the first week of September, the 27th British Division struck in the Vardar valley. It was a feint attack, and it did little more than recapitulate the history of former attacks. On the 14th an intense bombardment was directed against the sector from Kaymakchalan to the north-east, including the small stretch of front against which the main thrust was to be delivered. Early on the next morning Mishitch sent the Serbs forward between Mounts Sokol and Vetrenik. The Vetrenik ridge had been captured in April, and the Serbs attacked from it. Mr. Ward Price vividly described the positions which confronted the assailants: "The Serbs began their drive with an assault on those precipitous heights on the Tchernia bank, the crest of which the Bulgars had entrenched. So steep was the climb towards the



D'Esperey's Victory on the Servian Frontier Range and the Push towards Prilep (September 15-18, 1918).

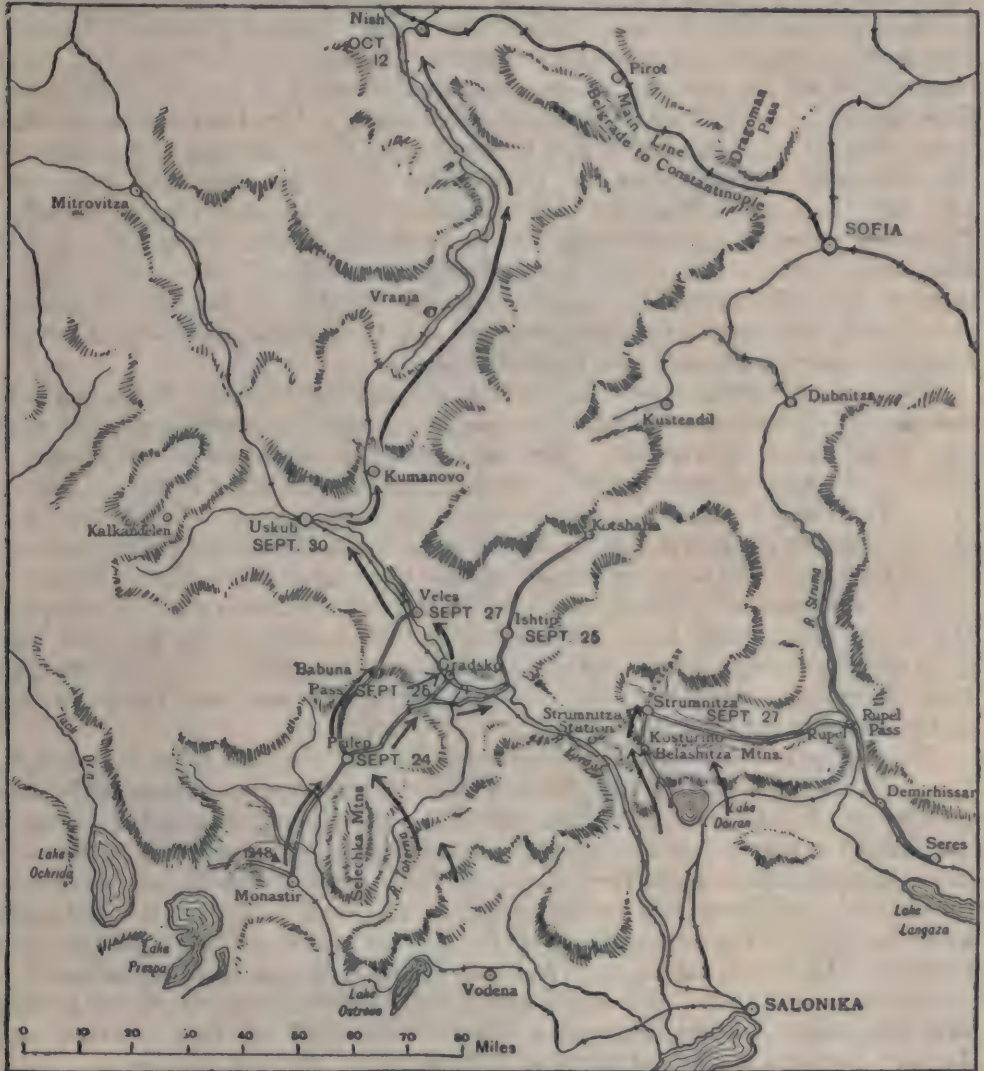
enemy positions that the Bulgars could only oppose the advancing Serbs by leaning over the parapets to drop bombs. Twice before the Serbs had attacked these formidable mountains in vain. 'We felt that the third time would change our luck,' said a young Servian officer whom I knew well, 'and if it did not, what could we do better than go forward to die as close as possible to the homes we long to win back from our enemies.'" There was a world of difference between this spirit and that of the Bulgars, clinging tenaciously to ground won by a treacherous bargain, and it is this that tells in the final resort. In that one day the outer defensive barrier, the first line, was crossed, despite its multiplied difficulties. On the following day Mount Sokol was stormed by the French, and the advancing troops had spread out so that their front became some sixteen miles. The impetuous attack had now

carried the Serbs some five miles deep into the Bulgar position, across the second lines. The Yugo-Slavs seized Mount Kozyak, a peak over 6,000 feet in height, commanding all the ground in the vicinity. The Bulgars lying in the tangled hills within the curve of the Tcherná River were now threatened with envelopment. So far only 3,000 prisoners and 24 guns had been taken; but the Allied casualties had been few, and their impetus was not spent. On the third day the advance continued to make headway. At some points it was twenty miles from the original position, and it now covered twenty-five miles from flank to flank. The right wing was hastening to the Vardar, while the centre was struggling to reach the Tcherná. On the fourth day the Serbs crossed the Tcherná; and, skirting the broken mass of the Selechka range, pushed forward towards Prilep. The cavalry entered Poloshko, and wheeled to the east and neared the Vardar. It was on this same day, the 18th, that General Milne began to attack east of the Vardar. For four days the guns had been roaring over this area, and a little before dawn the attack between the Vardar and Lake Doiran began. The objectives were those same terrible features which none who formed part of the British force in the Balkans will ever forget. The "Pip" (or "P") ridge, a low ripple in the ground sloping towards the south and overlooking the Allied positions from a height of some 2,000 feet, and the Petit Couronné, with its tiers mounting to Grand Couronné, were held by first-rate troops who had behind them the memory of a victorious defence of as difficult country as it is given to soldiers to attack. All the positions had been carefully ranged, and the unforgettable experiences of Jumeaux ravine, which had to be crossed before Petit Couronné was reached, were among the worst horrors of the war. The 12th Cheshires and 9th South Lancashires penetrated to the Bulgar third line, only to be forced back to their starting-point with nearly three-quarters of their number casualties. "Pip" ridge thus held, the advance of the Seres (Hellenic) Division and Welsh troops, who reached the slopes of Grand Couronné, could not be maintained; and the 7th South Wales Borderers, who covered the retreat, came back twenty strong. The Cretan Division, with British troops, east of the lake, had also to abandon their gains. It might have seemed that all was lost.

But battles are a whole, and it matters little whether one flank holds if the other yields. Indeed the danger, in such a case, comes to the flank which holds. The Bulgar line was now fluid west of the Vardar, and the Allies could desire nothing better than that the eastern flank should be contained and compelled to stand while the Allies cut round to their rear. Events had begun to move rapidly. Again, on the 19th, the Greek and British troops advanced once more, and reached, without being able to hold, Grand Couronné and "P" ridge. In the afternoon they dug themselves in, with Petit Couronné and Doiran town in their hands. But meanwhile the Serbs were across the Vardar behind the Bulgar positions. The Serbs had also crossed the Tcherná, and on the 21st the French were in Prilep; and the next day the troops in front of the Greeks and British recognised the inevitable and began to fall back, with the Allies in close pursuit. They made way but slowly over the difficult ground; but the sight of burning stores lighted them on. On the 23rd the Serbs reached Gradsko, on the Vardar. The troops under General Milne were crossing the Belashitzá range towards Strumnitzá; and as far as Monastir the Allied line was advancing. The 11th "German" Army was now being shepherded westward, and was fast losing touch with the Eastern armies. The situation had become almost beyond hope. Ferdinand had retired to a watering-place a month before. He now saw



that the hour had struck when his crown was at stake. Reinforcements were asked from Berlin and Vienna at once; but none were forthcoming, for the best of reasons—none could be spared. Sofia was almost in a state of revolution. The Western front, not severely tested as yet, had yielded more than any one had foreseen. Fer-



The Allied Advance into Servia.

dinand realised that the hour was critical without seeing how to escape its implications.

On the evening of the 25th the Serbs had seized the Babuna Pass, which cut the road to Veles and Uskub. They had captured Ishtip, and the cavalry were riding towards Kotshana, many miles behind the Strumnitza front. The enemy front was now cut into two parts, and the 11th Army was forced to fall back westward towards

Kalkandelen. The 26th British Division was advancing into Bulgaria by Kosturino. The Austrians in Albania were left behind like a rock in a swirling cataract. The end came; and, on the following morning, at about eight o'clock, a Bulgarian *parlementaire* approached the British lines, under a white flag, and was conducted to Milne's headquarters. A request was made for an immediate armistice for forty-eight hours to allow of discussions for the conclusion of peace. General Franchet d'Esperey, consulted by telephone, refused the request for an armistice, but stated: "I will receive with all due courtesy the duly qualified delegates of the Royal Bulgarian Government." So the victorious advance continued, and on the following day the Serbs occupied Veles and the British Strumnitza. On the evening of the following day, the 28th, General Lukov, the Commander of the 2nd Bulgarian Army; M. Liapchev, the Finance Minister; and M. Radev, an ex-Minister, reached Salonika. They were received on the following day by the Allied Commander-in-Chief, and at once accepted the terms. These were submitted to the Allied Governments, and at noon on the 30th September hostilities ceased. The French had entered Uskub; but the Bulgars were now out of the war, and only the Austrian and German detachments remained to be dealt with in the Balkans.

The terms of surrender were as abject as any one could desire. Bulgaria was to evacuate all Grecian and Servian territories, to demobilise immediately, and hand over all her means of transport. She was to make no hindrance to the passage of Allied troops through her territory. Strategic points were to be occupied if necessary. The Bulgars began to evacuate Servia on 10th October. The Italians had already begun to advance in Albania, and on 2nd October British and Italian gunboats raided Durazzo. The Germans saw too late the importance of the Balkan front, and began to send reinforcements thither. But Ferdinand abdicated on 4th October, and the Crown Prince Boris began his short reign. The Allied troops advanced with great rapidity through Servia, and after a vigorous engagement on the 12th occupied Nish, thus cutting the Berlin-Constantinople railway. A week later the Allies were on the shores of the Danube.

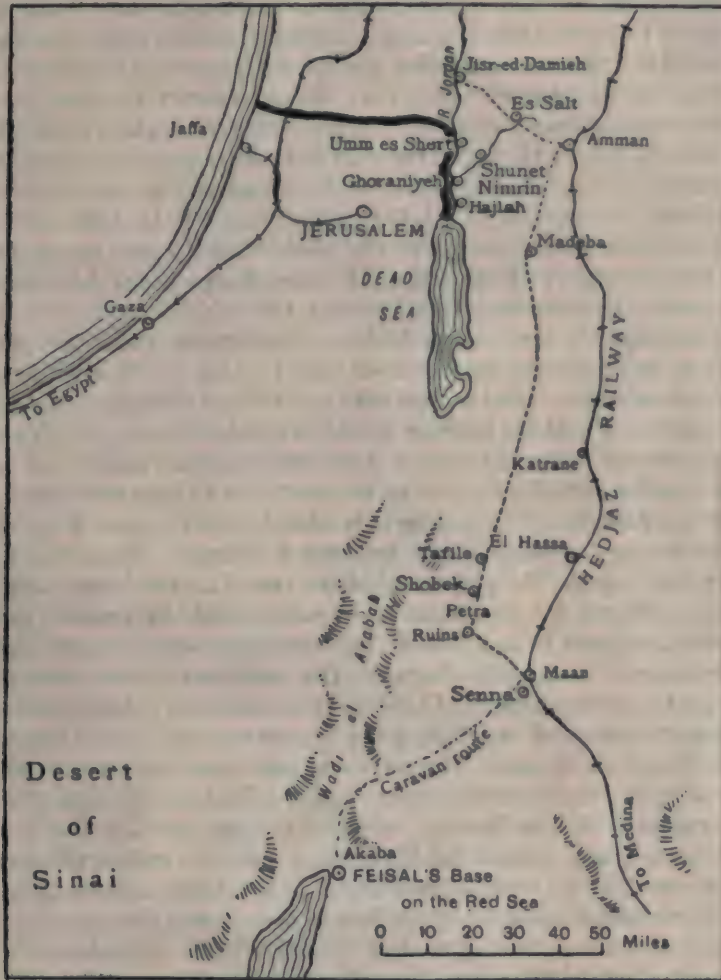
There were few more dramatic episodes in the war than the Bulgarian collapse. It was not that they had not everything in their favour except the success of the chief member of the Alliance. Easterners seemed to prove their case by the effects of the Bulgarian failure, but they overlooked the fact that it was directly attributable to the German failure on the Western front. If the enemy had been successful there the Germans could have held the Balkan sector, and in all probability it would never have given way. The positions held by the Bulgars were almost impregnable. But the spirit of the troops holding them had been undermined, and the strongest positions are useless in such a case. The effects of Bulgaria's defection upon the war as a whole were soon seen. Allenby had begun to move. Marshall was soon to follow, and Turkey's northern flank was uncovered. To her plight we must now turn.

### III. THE TURKISH DEBACLE.

THE earlier movements of the year in Palestine had contained hardly a suggestion of that bold and skilful handling which was later to crush completely the three Turkish armies in Syria. When Ludendorff was beginning his March offensive,



Allenby was opening a series of operations across the Jordan which seemed to most observers as ill-staged as futile. By the end of the third week in March the Jordan valley had been sufficiently cleared of the enemy to suggest the possibility of lightening the task of the Arab forces, far away to the south, by a powerful raid into the land of Moab, which, since the Crusades, had never heard the tramp of British forces. The Grand Sherif of Mecca had, almost two years before,\* thrown off the barely tolerated



Feisal's Operations on the Hedjaz Line.

yoke of Turkish suzerainty. He had seized Mecca and the Red Sea port, Jeddah; and his revolt fired the Arabs as far north as Damascus. Yemen, in the south-east of Arabia, had never owned Turkish sway. We have seen how grave a preoccupation this Muslim defiance proved in the days when Turkey still had the power and confidence to threaten the Suez Canal. But those days had long passed. The Sherif Feisal, son of Hussein, the King of the Hedjaz, had gradually pushed his way with the

\* June 9, 1916.

Arab forces to within seven miles of Maan, on the Hedjaz railway. His forces were based on Akaba, at the head of the eastern arm into which the Red Sea divides to form the peninsula of Sinai. The Sherif Nasir, who had thrown in his lot with Hussein and the Sheikh Auda abu Tayi, had advanced as far as Tafilé, but had been driven out by a powerful counter-attack by mixed Turkish and German troops. But the Arab auxiliaries grew until there were between 40,000 and 50,000 acting with Feisal, though probably not more than 3,000 formed the specially trained "Regular" army whose rôle it was to cover Allenby's flank. Nothing could wholly exorcise the spirit which burned within these strange allies, nor persuade them to abandon the splendid charges of their many coloured ranks that showed against the background of the desert like the fronds of some rare flower. Tafilé, with its Turkish garrison, had been surrendered to the Arabs through terror of that high voice of Auda which rang above the battle. But side by side with this thread of romance there now ran a strand of modernity. Captain Lloyd, M.P., and Colonel T. E. Lawrence, an Oxford man who turned his academic Arabic to the needs of life, helped to organise Feisal's force; and there was part of the Imperial Camel Corps under Lieutenant-Colonel R. V. Buxton and a detachment of airmen with the Arabs.

They had attracted to them a formidable concentration, and, while major operations in Palestine were impossible, it seemed useful to Allenby to attempt a diversion in favour of his auxiliaries. Medina still held out, though straitly invested; but with Maan in the hands of Feisal the garrison would be completely cut off. To accomplish this diversion Allenby resolved to enter Moab, destroy the viaduct and tunnel near Amman, and thereby cut off all traffic to the south for at least some weeks.

**The Raids on Amman.**—The Jordan is bordered by a fringe of flat ground about a mile deep which in the rainy season becomes a swamp. Farther east is a series of clay ridges, and beyond the plateau of Moab, rising into isolated rocky hills, and falling to the plain, cut by the paths of numerous and deep wadis, in which lies Amman. Rain had been falling heavily for some days when, on the night of 21st March, the crossing of the Jordan began. The swiftness of the current prevented the crossing of the 60th (London) Division at Ghoraniyeh; but farther south, at Hajlah, swimmers succeeded in reaching the opposite bank, and by means of ferries and bridges a battalion crossed. The following night another attempt was made to cross at Ghoraniyeh, but the flooded river and the Turkish fire were too serious an obstacle. A regiment of New Zealand mounted troops crossed at Hajlah during the morning of the 22nd and pushed the Turks back. By the end of the day a bridge-head had been established and the whole of the Londoners were across. But the delay was a severe handicap to the expedition; and though the Londoners captured the pass to Es Salt on the metalled road at Shunet Nimrin and entered Es Salt itself on the 25th, the Turks had gained time to take counter-measures. On this day again heavy rain fell, and all wheeled traffic had to be sent back. The ground became slippery, and horses had to be pushed and pulled up the slopes. The advance became slower. Both men and horses were exhausted, and only demolition parties could be sent against the railway. On the evening of the 27th the New Zealanders cut the railway south of Amman; but the Australians, on the north, were held off the line, though they succeeded in blowing up a bridge during the night. Heavy rain was again falling, and when a brigade of Londoners came up their packs were sodden and their boots heavy and sticky with mud. But they attacked against prepared positions astride the road from Es Salt, with only mountain artillery to support them.



The Australians were on their left, the Camel Brigade on the right, and the New Zealanders south of the village. Very little progress was made; and the troops, especially the gallant Londoners, suffered heavy loss, and had to beat off repeated counter-attacks from Turkish reinforcements on the following day. Two further battalions and a battery of Royal Horse Artillery came up in the afternoon, and the attack was resumed at 2 A.M. on the 30th. Some of the New Zealanders succeeded in entering Amman, but were met with heavy fire from the houses. It was obvious that, without much heavier artillery support, success could only be bought with heavy losses; and as Turkish reinforcements from the west of the Jordan were now threatening the small force left to hold Es Salt and cover the rear of the detachments at Amman, the order was given to retire. By the evening of 2nd April the wounded had been evacuated, and the whole force was across the Jordan, with the exception of the troops left to hold the bridgehead on the east bank. "Although no permanent damage had been done to the Hedjaz railway, the raid had succeeded in drawing northwards and retaining, not only the Turkish troops which had been operating against the Arabs, but in addition a portion of the garrison of Maan and the stations farther south." \* Profiting by this diversion, Feisal cut the railway north and south of Maan, stormed Senna, 4,000 yards from the station, on 13th April, and four days later entered the station. He was unable, however, to reduce the strong positions north of the station, and withdrew to Senna. Meanwhile the Turks, who had reoccupied Shunet Nimrin with 5,000 rifles, had delivered a heavy counter-attack on the bridgeheads east of the Jordan, and had been beaten off with heavy loss.

Allenby had resolved to cut off this force about the middle of May; but, on the urgent representations of the Beni Sakhr tribe who were concentrated about Madeba, he agreed to anticipate his blow in order to gain their support. The plan was to attack the Shunet Nimrin position with two brigades of the 60th Division, while the mounted troops cut the Turkish communications from the north and left the southern track to be dealt with by the Beni Sakhr Arabs. The attack began early in the morning of 30th April, when the 60th Division rapidly captured the advanced works of the Shunet Nimrin position. By 6 P.M. that evening the mounted troops were in possession of Es Salt. But on the morning of 1st May these troops were heavily attacked on their flank near the Jordan. These detachments were pressed back, abandoning nine of their guns and part of their transport. Es Salt was attacked by superior forces on the following day, and in order to cope with this blow the troops operating against Shunet Nimrin had to be weakened. The Arabs also had not co-operated; and for these reasons the troops were again ordered to retire. By the evening of 4th May they were once more west of the Jordan with 50 officers and 892 ranks prisoners. The sole advantage of this raid was that the concentration east of the Jordan had been considerably increased, and the Turks had been given the impression that their positions in this area were unsafe. But the events in France had now begun to influence the campaign in Palestine. During April the 52nd and 74th Divisions were withdrawn for service on the Western front, where we have already seen them taking part in that long-drawn-out battle which Ludendorff knew to be the death knell of German military power. Indian divisions from Mesopotamia were sent to take the place of the British troops; but even in July British battalions were still being withdrawn from Allenby's force, and in such circumstances no considerable operations could be undertaken. The positions were constantly improved by raids,

\* Allenby's Dispatch.

some of them achieving considerable success. On 14th July the Turks, in their turn, attacked the British front near the Jordan and seized Abu Tellul, which lies just west of the Roman road from Jericho. But within an hour the 1st Australian Light Horse counter-attacked and recovered the position, capturing 216 Germans, including 12 officers. An attempt, at the same time, to seize a ford below Ghoraniyeh was observed, and the force was dispersed with heavy loss by a cavalry attack, in which the Jodhpur Lancers took a brilliant part.

**Allenby's Plans.**—Reorganisation had been proceeding apace during this period, and the last Indian battalions had been incorporated in divisions early in August. Allenby's offensive was conditioned by the rains which usually begin at the end of October and turn the plains of Sharon and Esdraelon into swamps impassable for transport, outside the few existing roads. Any considerable operations must therefore be initiated by the middle of September. About that time the Turks had, south of Beirut, a total force of some 32,000 rifles, 3,000 sabres, and 400 guns. Against these forces Allenby had available in the fighting line 57,000 rifles, 12,000 sabres, and 540 guns, a considerable superiority, especially in mounted troops, though not an overwhelming superiority considering that the Turks were on the defensive on carefully organised positions. But behind the enemy was a consistent tradition of failure, and even the German prestige had faded during the summer. In reckoning his forces Allenby did not include his Arab auxiliaries; but he realised that they considerably increased his power, and he was anxious to join hands with them. He had already proved that an incursion into the land of Moab left too long a line of exposed communications while the Turks were able to move troops across the Jordan; but to obtain control of the river crossings he must first defeat the 8th and 7th Armies west of the Jordan. With the exception of a small reserve, the whole of the Turkish forces lay below a line drawn through the Jordan crossings at Jisr ed Damieh, Nablus, and Tul Keram to the coast, a line which was nowhere much more than a day's march from the present front. "All the enemy's communications to Damascus ran northwards from the eastern half of this line, converging on El Afule and Beisan, some twenty-five miles to the north. Thence, with the exception of the roads leading from El Afule along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, his communications ran eastwards up the valley of the Yarmuk to Deraa, the junction of the Palestine and Hedjaz railways. Thus El Afule, Beisan, and Deraa were the vital points on his communications." \* El Afule in the Plain of Esdraelon, and Beisan in the Vale of Jezreel, could be reached by the cavalry if the lines could be breached to allow them to pass through; but, if the Turks were to be cut off, the breach would have to be made at the beginning of the operations so that the cavalry could perform their journey of forty-five or sixty miles, and cross the hills of Samaria to their objectives. If the Turks were allowed time to man the passes, the cavalry would be faced by the necessity of fighting costly engagements. Deraa was beyond the reach of the British cavalry but not of Arab horsemen, who, if they could not hold the junction, could dislocate the traffic.

Everything, then, depended upon the immediate breaking of the Turkish lines, and Allenby's plans were carefully laid in order to compass this development. The main attack was delivered in the coastal plain and not in the hills north of Jerusalem, where the positions were of great strength and promised little chance of rapid movement. The coastal sector was more easily supplied, and gave access to the Plain of

\* Allenby's Dispatch.



Esdraelon through the hills of Samaria at their narrowest point. "The coastal plain at Jiljulieh, the ancient Gilgal, is some ten miles in width. The railway from Jiljulieh to Tul Keram skirts the foothills, running through a slight depression on the eastern edge of the plain. To the west of this depression the Turks had constructed two defensive systems. The first, 14,000 yards in length and 3,000 yards in depth, ran along a sandy ridge in a north-westerly direction from Bir Adas to the sea. It consisted of a series of works connected by continuous fire trenches. The second, or Et Tireh system, 3,000 yards in the rear, ran from the village of that name to the mouth of the Nahr el Falik. On the enemy's extreme right the ground, except for a narrow strip along the coast, is marshy, and could only be crossed in a few places. The defence of the second system did not, therefore, require a large force." \* Allenby entrusted the main attack in the coastal sector to Lieutenant-General Sir E. Bulfin with the 21st Corps, which, for these operations, disposed of the 3rd (Lahore), 7th (Meerut), 54th, 75th, and 60th Divisions, with the French detachment (the equivalent of an infantry brigade with other arms attached), and the 5th Australian Light Horse. Bulfin had thus some 35,000 rifles and 383 guns, against the Turkish force of 8,000 rifles and 130 guns. His orders were to break through the defences between the railway and the sea, seize the foothills south-east of Jiljulieh, and then, wheeling north-east, to shepherd the Turks towards El Afule, into the arms of the cavalry. Lieutenant-General Sir H. Chauvel, with the Desert Mounted Corps, less the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, was to go through the breach in the line, seize the crossings of the Nahr el Falik, and turn north-east from Jelameh, cross the hills of Samaria, and enter the Plain of Esdraelon at El Lejjun (Megiddo) and Abu Shusheh. El Afule was to be seized; Nazareth, the Turkish General Head Quarters, occupied; and the remainder of the corps was to ride down the Vale of Jezreel to Beisan. Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode was to advance his line astride the Bireh-Nablu road on the night preceding the main attack, preparatory to a further advance to block the exits to the lower valley of the Jordan and to profit by success in the coastal sector. The concentration on the coast had been achieved by reducing the strength of Chetwode's force to a minimum and withdrawing reserves from the north of Jerusalem. To cover this concentration Major-General Sir E. Chaytor was ordered to carry out a series of demonstrations as though an attack east of the Jordan were impending. A mobile Arab column was concentrated with British armoured cars, fifty miles east of Amman, to aim at Deraa.

**The Cavalry through the Gap.**—The concentration on the coast sector was not suspected, chiefly because of the indisputable supremacy which the British airmen had now achieved. On 16th and 17th September the airmen attacked the junction at Deraa. On the former day the Arabs raided the railway fifteen miles south of the junction, and on the 17th they destroyed the line both north and west. The Turkish transport was thus disorganised at a critical moment, and attention was riveted on the area east of the Jordan. It was under these circumstances the great offensive began. During the night of the 18th Chetwode's corps, the 10th and 53rd Divisions, swung its right forward, east of the Bireh-Nablu road, against heavy opposition. About 4.30 the bombardment on the coastal plain began, the artillery being assisted by the fire of two destroyers. After fifteen minutes' intense shelling the advance began. It was not only successful but immediately successful. The 3rd (Lahore) Division attacked the positions between Bir Adas and the road; on

\* Allenby's Dispatch.

its left the 75th, 7th (Meerut), and 60th Divisions rapidly overran the first defensive system, and without pause advanced against the second. The 60th Division reached the Nahr el Falik, and turned to the north-east towards Tul Keram, opening the door for the cavalry. By 11 A.M. the 75th Division had captured the strongly fortified village of Et Tireh. The whole of the coastal sector was in motion, and the Turks fleeing, closely pursued by the 5th Australian Light Horse with Chasseurs d'Afrique and Spahis. The roads from Tul Keram to Messudie and Nablus became congested, and the Australian Flying Corps added to the confusion by persistent attacks.



The Decisive Battle.

Chetwode now began to co-operate. The Turks on this part of the front were not disorganised, and their strength was almost equal to that of the 20th Corps; but in a series of heavy engagements the troops advanced. The country was broken and offered few facilities for using artillery support; but by midday the 10th Division had advanced seven miles, and the divisions of Bulfin's corps continued to sweep the enemy into the hills. Below Samaria the two Indian divisions encountered heavy opposition at Beit Lid. The Turks had not yet realised the hopelessness of their position. By noon of the 19th the Mounted Corps had reached Jelameh, and after



a short rest the advance was continued. The 5th Cavalry Division rode north, and then turning through the hills of Samaria entered the Plain of Esdraelon at Abu Shusheh. The 13th Brigade then rode towards Nazareth as the 14th turned towards El Afule. The 13th reached Nazareth at 5.30 A.M. on the 20th, capturing the papers and some of the Staff of the German Commander-in-Chief. There was some stiff fighting in the streets, and 2,000 prisoners were taken. But Liman von Sanders had meanwhile been roused and pushed into a motor car, which left with the notorious Lieutenant von Papen, who had so cynically abused the privileges of his position as military attaché at Washington. The horses of the brigade were worn out, and the men were so weary that, for the moment, they left the still occupied hills north of the city and went to El Afule with their prisoners, papers, £8,000 in gold, and a good stock of wine. The 14th Brigade captured El Afule about 7.30, taking 1,500 prisoners and again a considerable store of wine. The 4th Division rode up the Wadi Arah, which leads to the pass of Musmus, and thence by way of El Lejjun (Megiddo) to Afule. A battalion had been sent from Afule to hold the narrow pass, but only its advanced guard arrived in time, and the cavalry quickly dispersed them and rode to El Lejjun.

There the 2nd Lancers met the rest of the battalion, killed 46 with the lance, and captured the remainder, 450 men. The division then rode on to Afule, which it entered half an hour after the 14th Brigade. They left Afule and rode into Beisan, through the Vale of Jezreel, at 4.30 in the afternoon, having covered eighty miles in thirty-four hours. At Beisan 1,000 prisoners were taken; and even after their weary ride a regiment was found to seize the railway bridge over the Jordan at Jisr el Mujamie. An hour after the 4th Division entered Beisan the Australian Mounted Division, who had followed more slowly, entered Jenin, the Air Force headquarters where the Nablus road leaves the hills. Relays of aeroplanes had prevented the enemy aeroplanes leaving the aerodrome during the battle, and when the Australians, some 500 strong, enveloped the town, they found the garrison completely demoralised. Nearly 7,000 men, including 700 Germans, surrendered; much material was captured and great stores of wine. "Thus within thirty-six hours of the commencement of the battle all the main outlets of escape remaining to the Turkish 7th and 8th Armies had been closed. They could only avoid capture by using the tracks which run south-east from the vicinity of Nablus to the crossings of the Jordan at Jisr ed Damieh." \*

During the night of the 20th the enemy realised the extent of their defeat, and began to retreat. On the morning of the 21st the Turkish rearguards were driven in, and all organised resistance ceased. Later in the day the Australian Light Horse, attached to Bulfin's corps, with the Chasseurs d'Afrique and Spahis leading, entered Nablus (Shechem) from the west, and the 10th Division of Chetwode's corps entered it from the south. By the evening the 20th Corps occupied the high ground north of Nablus, and the line of the 21st ran through Samaria and Attara. "Since the early hours of the morning great confusion had reigned in the Turkish rear. Camps and hospitals were being hurriedly evacuated; some were in flames. The roads leading north-east and east from Nablus to Beisan and the Jordan valley were congested with transport and troops. Small parties of troops were moving east along the numerous wadis. The disorganisation which already existed was increased by the repeated attacks of the Royal Air Force; in particular, on the closely packed columns of transport moving north from Balata to Kh. Ferweh, where a road branches

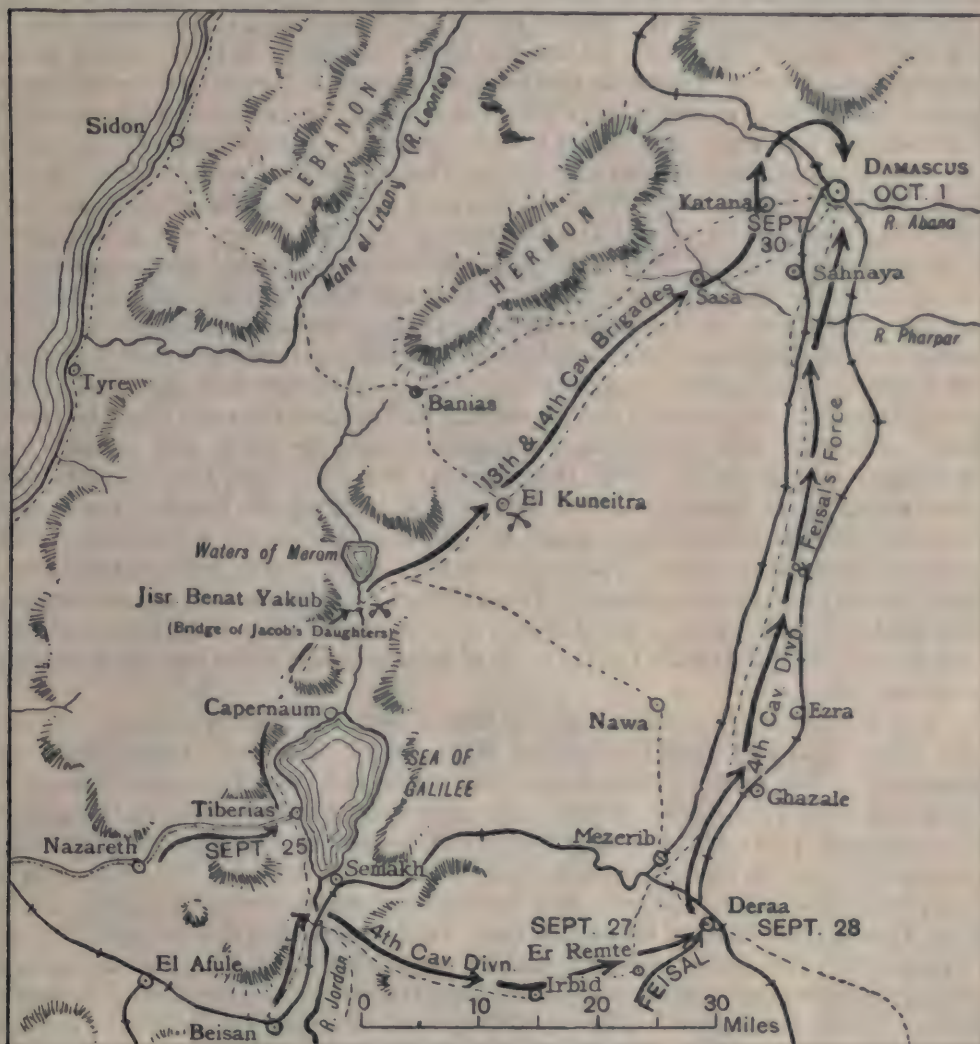
off, along the Wadi Farah, to Jisr ed Damieh. Some of the transport continued along the road to Beisan, where it fell into the hands of the 4th Cavalry Division. The greater part made for the Jordan along the Wadi Farah. Nine miles from Kh. Ferweh, at Ain Shibleh, a road branches off to the north to Beisan. A mile beyond this point the Wadi Farah passes through a gorge. The head of the column was heavily bombed at this point. The drivers left their vehicles in panic, wagons were overturned, and in a short time the road was completely blocked. Still attacked by the Royal Air Force, the remainder of the column turned off at Ain Shibleh and headed for Beisan." \*

At 1.30 A.M. on 22nd September the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade and British West Indies battalions of Chaytor's force seized Jisr ed Damieh, and cut off all hope of escape in that direction. In the early hours of the morning small bodies of Turks advanced to Beisan under a white flag. Later in the morning the 20th Corps began to advance up the Nablus-Beisan roads to collect stragglers, and to drive any formed bodies into the hands of the 4th Cavalry Division. A column ten miles long, with transport and guns, was attacked on the Ain Shibleh-Beisan road by the Royal Air Force and broke up, abandoning guns and transport. During this and the next two days the work of collecting the constituents of the 8th and 7th Armies continued. The number of men surrendering and the vast amounts of material abandoned hampered the advance of the troops. "On one stretch of road, under five miles in length, 87 guns, 55 motor lorries, and 842 vehicles were found." \* One column attempted to escape across the Jordan five miles south-east of Beisan, but the bulk of it was intercepted by the 29th Lancers and Yeomanry, who killed many and captured the rest, while the 36th (Jacob's) Horse broke up the body which had crossed. By the evening of the 24th the 8th and 7th Armies had ceased to exist.

**Haifa.**—Allenby by this time had occupied Haifa, and had thus secured another avenue of supply. The 13th Cavalry Brigade returned to Nazareth from Afule on the 21st, and on the morning of the following day attacked part of the Haifa garrison, who were endeavouring to escape to Tiberias. The 18th Bengal Lancers, who caught this column in the moonlight, killed many, and captured 300. The brigade rode out at 3 A.M. on the 23rd, and occupied Acre, which had successfully resisted Napoleon, without opposition. The remainder of the 5th Cavalry Division advanced against Haifa about the same time. The troops approaching the narrow avenue into the port between the spurs of Mount Carmel and the marshes of Kishon found the road and river crossings defended by many machine guns; but while the Mysore Lancers were clearing the rocky slopes of Mount Carmel, the Jodhpur Lancers charged through the defile over the machine guns, and captured the town with 1,350 prisoners and 17 guns. The position of the 4th Army was no longer tenable. The western bank of the Jordan had been cleared, the 38th (Jewish) Battalion achieving its first success by the capture of the Umm es Shert bridgehead on the morning of the 22nd. The following day the 4th Army was in full retreat, pursued by the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division. At 4.30 p.m. the New Zealanders captured Es Salt with 380 prisoners and 3 guns. Two days later Amman fell, and in the pursuit up the Hedjaz railway over 5,000 prisoners and 28 guns were taken. Chaytor's force remained at Amman, and on 28th September the troops who had retreated from Maan, five days before, found themselves between the Arabs and the British troops; and on the following day the Turkish commander surrendered with 5,000 men.



**The Advance on Damascus.**—The Desert Mounted Corps had already begun to advance on Damascus in two columns. The 4th Australian Light Horse captured Semakh, at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, on the 24th, "after fierce hand-to-hand fighting, in which 350 Turks and Germans and a gun were captured. Tiberias was occupied on the following afternoon." \* The next day the 4th Cavalry Division



The Capture of Damascus.

(Major-General Barrow) began its 120-mile march, crossing the Jordan below the Sea of Galilee, and marching through Gilead towards Deraa. The other column, consisting of the Australian Mounted and 5th Cavalry (Major-General MacAndrew) Divisions, started on the 27th, its route, the ancient highway from Egypt, being thirty miles shorter. Both divisions encountered opposition. The 4th Division, after driving

\* Allenby's Dispatch.

the enemy from Irbid and Er Remte, joined hands there with Feisal's force on the 28th. The Arabs had persistently harassed the retreat of the Turks, and on the 27th had broken up the remnant of the 4th Army, and then captured Deraa. The British then advanced through Mezerib with Feisal's force on its right flank, sweeping up stragglers. A column of Turks 1,500 strong was in this way driven, on the 30th, into the arms of the 14th Brigade at Sahnaya, not far from Damascus. The 5th and Australian Mounted Divisions approached the crossing at Jisr Benat Yakub (Bridge of Jacob's daughters), to find the bridge destroyed, and the crossing commanded by a German-Circassian battalion with machine guns. But the 5th Australian Light Horse crossed a mile below, and taking the enemy in flank captured 250 Germans and Turks, and forced the rest to retire. The column then continued its way, mounted and crossed the Jordan plateau to El Kuneitra, where again opposition was encountered. This was the zone of the Circassian settlements, and the villagers made themselves troublesome by sniping. There was a short but vigorous engagement at Sasa, which lies near one of the many streams—possibly the upper course of the historic Pharpar—that flow from Mount Hermon; but by 10 A.M. on the 30th the Australian Mounted Division was at Katana, twelve miles south-west of Damascus, on the Sidon-Cæsarea-Philippi-Damascus road. Shortly after midday the Turkish rearguards were driven back, and the Australians rode round Damascus on the west, and by evening had blocked the exits from the north and north-west. The 5th Division approached from the south, and entered the luxuriant oasis which has given Damascus its site. The 4th Division, with the Arab force, was at Sahnaya, and on the following morning, 1st October, the Desert Mounted Corps and Arab army entered the oldest inhabited city in the world, amid scenes of great enthusiasm. The 3rd Australian Light Horse rode swiftly north, and captured 1,500 more prisoners. This oldest of cities produced a squalid impression on the British troops; but it is rich in memories of days when the world was still young. Within its walls lies the tomb of Saladin, about whom legend has thrown a golden halo.

But it was not these strange glories that constituted Allenby's praise. It was but the twelfth day since the opening of the battle, and three armies had been destroyed. Over 60,000 prisoners had been taken and over 300 guns. There yet remained some 17,000 men, though only 4,000 were effective rifles, of the 45,000 Germans and Turks who five days before had been in or retreating on Damascus. The severity of the strain thrown on the troops was enormous; but he alone is a true leader who knows when and how to exact the impossible of his troops. Even now Allenby did not allow his men to rest. He determined to seize the line Beirut-Rayak, which would give him a new port for supply, with a road and railway leading inland to Damascus. Rayak was occupied on 5th October by the Desert Mounted Corps, except the Australian Mounted Division; and the 7th (Meerut) Division entered Beirut three days later, having marched 100 miles through the Phœnician plain in seven days, a very wonderful achievement. They had crossed "the ladder of Tyre"—the stone steps cut in a spur of Lebanon—and were deliriously cheered in Sidon. They had the distinction of being the first troops to enter Bagdad. French ships and British destroyers had entered the port the preceding day. When Bulfin entered Beirut later on, flowers were strewn in the path of his motor car.

**Aleppo.**—The last phase of the campaign had now begun. The troops were entering Syria, a country of mountains with gorge-like valleys, whose people had



suffered from the studied cruelties of Djemal Pasha. By a treaty of 1916 the British had recognised the special claims of France to Syria, and in the deliverance which was now taking place Britain was adding to the territories which should rest under French protection. The occupation of Syria would have been a matter of the utmost difficulty if the Turks had not first been defeated. The Lancashire and Yorks Yeomanry entered Tripoli on 13th October, the day after a French squadron had entered the port and landed marines. Five days later the pipers of the Seaforth



Operations after the Capture of Damascus.

played in the Meerut Division. By this time Homs, a little less than half-way between Damascus and Aleppo, and the site of the junction for the projected line from Bagdad, had been taken by the 5th Division. Allenby was now supplied by another advanced line from Tripoli to Homs; and he resolved to seize Aleppo. Many of the horses were worn out. Some of the troops were sick with malaria, and all were weary, so that only the 5th Division, with an armoured car detachment, could be allotted to Chauvel for the last march. Allenby judged that there were 20,000 Turks and Germans in Aleppo, but of these only 8,000 were combatants,

and these were demoralised. He therefore judged his little force to be sufficient. With the armoured cars in advance, the division moved out from Homs on 21st October, the day after the cars had entered the ancient Hittite city of Hama, on the Orontes. The cars went swiftly ahead with an Arab column. On the 22nd they reached Khan Sebit, halfway between Homs and Aleppo, as a Turkish rearguard was leaving in lorries. They immediately gave chase, and captured a German car, a lorry, and some prisoners. Two days later a rearguard was again encountered at Khan Tuman, ten miles south of Aleppo. This was dispersed; but five miles farther north the cars were held up by strong Turkish rearguards, and had to remain in observation until the cavalry came up. On the afternoon of the 25th October the 15th (Imperial Service) Cavalry Brigade arrived. That night a detachment of the Arab army forced its way through the eastern outskirts into the heart of the city. Early the next morning the Cavalry Brigade came up with the Turkish rearguard at Haritan, on the Aleppo-Katma road. "The Turkish rearguard consisted of some 2,500 infantry, 150 cavalry, and 8 guns. The Mysore Lancers and two squadrons of the Jodhpur Lancers attacked the enemy's left, covered by the fire of the armoured cars, the Machine-Gun Squadron, and two dismounted squadrons of the Jodhpur Lancers. The Mysore and Jodhpur Lancers charged most gallantly. A number of Turks were speared, and many threw down their arms, only to pick them up again when the cavalry had passed through and their weakness had become apparent. The squadrons were not strong enough to complete the victory, and were withdrawn till a larger force could be assembled." \* It was a gallant fight, and the last of Allenby's campaign. Muslimie junction was occupied that night, but before the troops could arrive to justify the advance on Alexandretta the armistice with Turkey had come into force. Thus ended one of the most remarkable campaigns in history. In just over five weeks 75,000 prisoners and 360 guns had been captured. In that time the 5th Cavalry Division had covered 500 miles, and alone had taken 11,000 prisoners.

**Mesopotamia.**—Meanwhile Marshall had appropriately completed the Mesopotamian campaign by the capture of the total force opposed to him on the Tigris. By a series of bold sweeping movements in the spring, he had compelled the Turks to retire up the Kifri-Kirkuk-Mosul road, under threat of envelopment; and had captured a considerable part of the 2nd Turkish Division. Kifri was evacuated in this way on 26th April; but three days later Marshall brought his opponent to battle at Tuz, and after a spirited engagement for three hours, he inflicted a decisive defeat, taking 1,200 prisoners and 12 field guns. The British troops marched up the road to Kirkuk without opposition, and were held off from attacking the Turks there by a torrential downpour of rain. Kirkuk was occupied on 7th May, and after another small engagement the Turks were forced to retire from the Lesser Zab. With this achievement, which deprived the Turks of a most fruitful area at the time of approaching harvest, the campaign settled down for the summer.

Allenby's troops were but a day's march from Aleppo when the Mesopotamian army woke to life once more, and in one short week captured the whole of the Tigris force. The railway had now been extended to Tekrit, and steamers plied regularly between that place and Basra. With rail and river communications connecting his advanced troops with the head of the Persian Gulf, Marshall's position was so much improved that he determined to attack. The 17th and 18th Indian Divisions began the operations with an attack on the strong Turkish position at Fathah, where the

\* Allenby's Dispatch.



Tigris flows through the Jebel-Hamrin range. On the east of the river was the 7th Indian Cavalry Brigade. On the other bank the 11th Indian Cavalry Brigade made a wide detour of fifty miles, crossed the Lower Zab north of the Turkish position, and established themselves, after another fifty-mile ride, across their communications. The following day the Turks were driven to the west bank of the river. After two days of stubborn fighting, the Turks were forced back on the hills covering



The Advance to Mosul.

Shergat, and surrounded. On the 28th and 29th the 17th Indian Division continued its attack. During the night of the 29th, 1,000 Turks attempted to escape, but were cut off; and on the following morning Ismail Hakki Pasha surrendered his total force, "consisting of the whole of the 14th Division, the bulk of the 2nd Division, and portions of two regiments of the 5th Division," some 7,000 men, "with all their artillery, train, and administrative services." \* The small detachments on the

\* Marshall's Dispatch.

Mosul road, below Kirkuk, had been brushed aside, and the Mesopotamian campaign was at an end. Marshall entered Mosul a few days later, but without opposition.

**Surrender.**—By the middle of October Allenby was at Homs and sweeping northwards, and the Allies were marching against the western frontier of European Turkey. On the 14th Turkey appealed to President Wilson to secure an armistice and open negotiations for peace, but no answer was returned. The Turks then took the step of releasing General Townshend, who had been their prisoner since the fall of Kut, and sending him to the admiral commanding the naval forces in the *Ægean*, Sir Somerset Calthorpe, to negotiate an immediate armistice. Turkish delegates arrived at Mudros, and on 30th October the terms of the armistice were signed, and came into force at noon the next day. The chief of these terms were the opening of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, the liberation of all Allied prisoners and interned Armenians, the immediate demobilisation of the Turkish army, the control of all railways by Allied officers, and the surrender of the garrisons in the Hedjaz, Assir, Yemen, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The surrender of Turkey shattered the most essential part of Germany's plan for undermining the British Empire. But at the moment it was signed Germany was past all such thoughts, and casting about to evade what threatened to be the most colossal military defeat in the world.

#### IV. THE GENERAL OFFENSIVE: THE BATTLES OF CHAMPAGNE, CAMBRESIS, AND FLANDERS.

ON 24th July Marshal Foch had formed a general idea of the development of the campaign. The subordinate commanders were asked to submit plans for limited offensives, which should prepare the way for a general offensive to be delivered later, when the situation became clearer. Towards the end of August these Allied attacks had made such headway that he foresaw the approach of the moment when the "disorganisation and fatigue of the German armies would be such that a general attack would secure the defeat of the enemy." \* It was later decided that, as soon as possible after the Battle of St. Mihiel, three great converging attacks should be delivered, beginning simultaneously or with only a few days' interval. These attacks were to be the Battle of Flanders, which should profit by the weakness and weariness of the troops holding the line between the Lys and the sea, and their absence of reserves; an operation in the centre, designed to break through the Hindenburg positions before the enemy had had time to organise them; and an operation on both sides of the Argonne forest in the general direction of Mezières. With subsidiary actions these three attacks would set the whole front between the sea and the Meuse in motion, and the battle was not to be allowed to die down until victory was won. "A battle," said Marshal Foch in an interview, "is a complicated operation that you prepare laboriously. . . . You think out every possible development, and decide on the way to deal with the situation created. One of those developments occurs; you put in operation your prearranged plan, and every one says, 'What genius to have thought of that at the critical moment!' whereas the credit is really due to the labour of preparation done beforehand."

It is this aspect of the campaign, so easy to overlook, which explains that unin-

\* *Pourquoi l'Allemagne a capitulé le 11 Novembre 1918. Etude faite sur documents du G. Q. G. français.*



interrupted progress which recovered from the Germans between 18th July and 25th September almost all the ground they had occupied in the spring offensive. If the troops went forward without a trace of indecision, and the hitherto victorious Germans bowed to their will and under pressure surrendered positions which had never been held by the Allies since the first days of the war, it was owing to the careful planning of their movements. But those great battles of August, which convinced the German Staff that they had no longer a chance of victory, were now



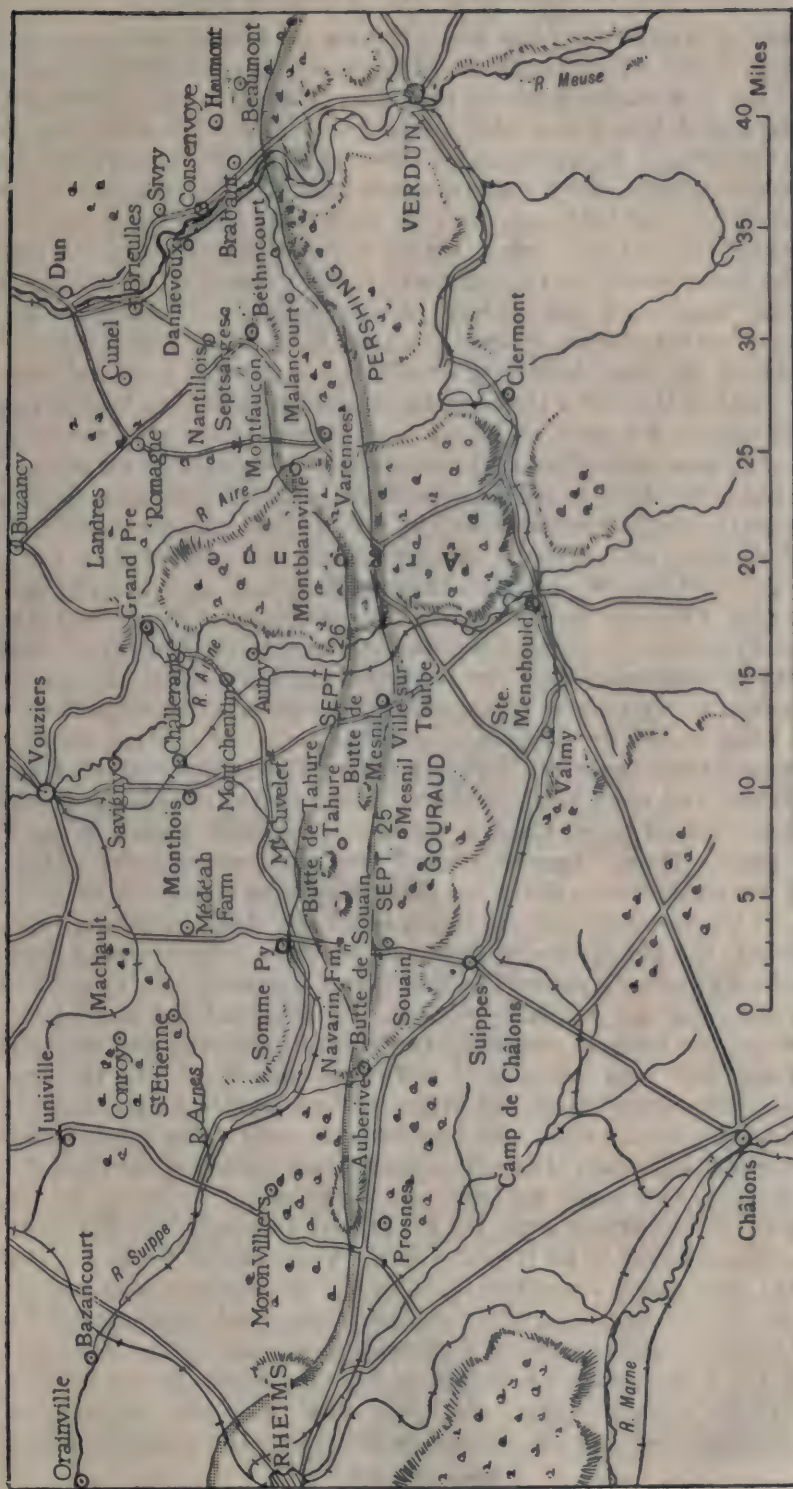
to pale before the blows of the greatest offensive in the history of the world. Between 21st March and 18th September Major Gädke held that the Allies, on the Western front, had suffered between 1,500,000 and 1,750,000 casualties. This estimate is a rough guide to the German casualties; and the enemy faced the general offensive with armies gravely weakened, wearied by continual fighting, and shaken by some ten weeks of constant failure to stand before the victorious advance of the Allies. An order, captured in the area west of Cambrai, gave the note of the phase which

was now beginning: "Until now, for military reasons, we have permitted the English to occupy some devastated enemy territory. In the rearguard battles we have inflicted heavy loss upon them. But now that we occupy very strong defensive positions, it is necessary to yield not another inch. The English seek to obtain here the decision, and the 14th Corps occupies one of the most important sectors of the line. Remember that you defend your firesides, your families, your beloved Fatherland; and think also what would happen if the war, and with it the enemy hordes, should be carried to the territory of our dear Fatherland." Cold comfort for the weary men who a few months before had been promised victory of the most decisive character!

**The Battle of the Champagne and the Argonne.**—The first of the three great converging attacks to begin was that of the Americans and French over the forty miles which stretched between the Meuse and the Souain road. The battles of August and September had tended to draw the bulk of the German armies into the bulge which the line made between the Scarpe and the Aisne. Other sectors had to be weakened in order that this westward curve should escape a fracture which would jeopardise the whole German position in France. But the lesson of St. Mihiel had not been lost upon the Command, and some fifteen divisions of the shrinking reserve had been concentrated near Briey, some twenty-six miles from Verdun, ready to reinforce the line south-west of Metz. But Foch quietly withdrew the 1st American Army east of the Meuse, and placed it west of the river, inserting in its place the 2nd American Army. The latter, in order to maintain the fiction that an attack was impending east of the Meuse, opened a heavy bombardment on that sector just before midnight on 25th September; and about the same time General Gouraud's 4th Army began to bombard the German positions between the Suippe and the Aisne, which runs west of the Argonne forest. Less than three hours later the 1st American Army, west of the Meuse, began its artillery preparation; and at 5.30 the Americans and French both began to advance northwards. The 1st American Army, commanded by Pershing, disposed of three corps, each of three divisions, and they were faced by only four German divisions, though one of these, at Varennes, was a Prussian Guard Division. Assisted by tanks, the Americans advanced with great courage and resolution in the morning mist, and by nine o'clock were through the first and second defensive systems between the Argonne forest and the Meuse. About noon they were through the German defensive belt altogether. They pressed up the Meuse, and seized Danneveux, over five miles from the original line. The brunt of the fighting farther west fell upon Major-General Hunter Liggett's 1st Corps. Montfaucon, standing in a commanding position north of the famous Mort Homme, was passed, but not reduced until the following day. The troops had advanced beyond the support of their artillery, and only the long-range heavy guns could give any assistance. But on the left Varennes was captured, and the troops passed Montblainville in the third line, but could not enter it until the following day. And at nightfall the advance had penetrated to an average depth of over six miles, and at places to a depth of almost nine miles, and the troops had captured over 5,000 prisoners.

Meanwhile Gouraud's 4th Army, west of the Argonne, advancing under a skilful barrage, had captured positions in Champagne which had already a melancholy fame in the war. In about three hours the first assaulting troops had overrun the outpost zone, and the attack on the main defensive line began. The positions had been strongly fortified, and every advantage had been taken of the broken nature





The Franco-American Advance on both sides of the Argonne (September 26, 1918).

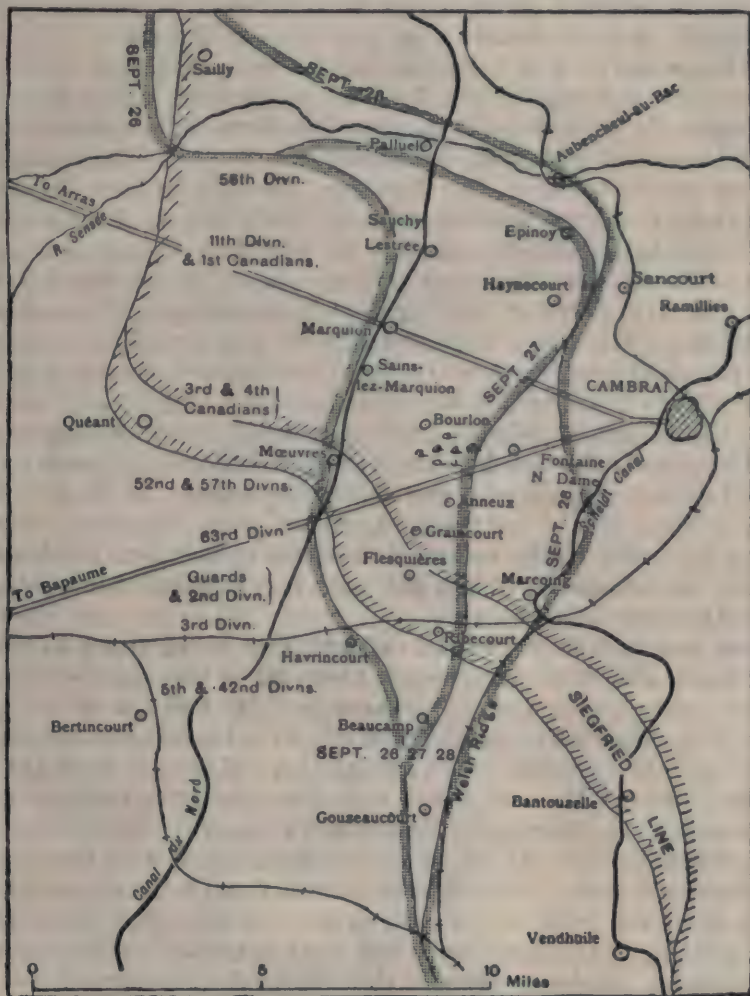
of the ground. But after about four hours' fighting the French had captured practically the whole of the main defensive line. Navarin Farm, which has an unpleasant notoriety in the Champagne battle of 1915, was taken at a rush. The Buttes of Tahure, Souain, and Mesnil were also overrun with ease; but there was a fierce struggle at the villages of Ripont and Tahure, at Rouvroy, Cernay, and Servon. Round these strong points the struggle ebbed and flowed before they were captured; but by nightfall Gouraud held some fourteen miles of the Hindenburg positions to a depth of between two and three miles. On the following day the battle was resumed. Marwitz, who now commanded the 6th Army, in the Verdun sector, had been badly hit in the first attack, and reserves were at once thrown in to check the advance. Some of these were drawn from Einem's 3rd Army front, which Gouraud was attacking. Ludendorff saw that the American advance constituted a critical feature of the offensive, and on this sector there was less manœuvring room in front of positions absolutely vital to the defensive. Montfaucon was cleared on the 27th, and the Americans were now in possession of one of the most commanding features for miles. There were other gains, too, both in the Argonne forest, where the advance could hardly be swift, and in the neighbourhood of the Aire, which flanks it on the east. The troops had to beat off heavy and persistent counter-attacks, and some of these young men from New Jersey, Ohio, Washington, Oregon, Maryland, and Virginia had their first experiences of the war in repulsing the Prussian Guard. The French 4th Army also continued its advance, and east of Somme Py crossed the Challerange railway.

**The Battle of Cambresis.**—But the Germans had only made up their mind that Foch meant to cut his way to the vital communications between Mezières and Longuyon, when they were confronted with the threat of another thrust to the lateral communications from the British armies. The territory about Cambrai is called Cambresis, and the "hammer blows" which broke through the Hindenburg defences from Cambrai to St. Quentin constitute the battle known to the French under that name. These "hammer blows" were the decisive factor in the Allied victory. It was on this sector of the line that the German defences were most highly organised. If they were broken, the enemy could not stand anywhere. But, "on the other hand, the long period of sustained offensive action through which the British armies had already passed had made large demands both upon the troops themselves and upon my available reserves. Throughout our attacks from 8th August onwards, our losses in proportion to the results achieved and the number of prisoners taken had been consistently and remarkably small. In the aggregate, however, they were considerable, and in face of them an attack upon so formidably organised a position as that which now confronted us could not be lightly undertaken. Moreover, the political effects of an unsuccessful attack upon a position so well known as the Hindenburg Line would be large, and would go far to revive the declining *moral*, not only of the German army, but of the German people."\* But Sir Douglas Haig, with full confidence in his troops, resolved to attack this formidable defensive system, "the outstanding characteristic of which was the skill with which it was sited so as to deny us effective artillery positions from which to attack it. The chief rôle of the (Scheldt) canal was that of affording cover to resting troops and to the garrisons of the main defensive trench lines during a bombardment."\* Owing to the nature of the ground through which the canal runs there are deep cuttings, sometimes sixty feet deep, "while between Bellicourt and the neighbourhood of Ven-

\* Haig's Dispatch.



dhule the canal passes through a tunnel for a distance of 6,000 yards. In the sides of the cuttings the enemy had constructed numerous tunnelled dug-outs and concrete shelters. Along the top edge of them he had concealed well-sited concrete or armoured machine-gun emplacements." \* Switches and communication trenches, "for the most part heavily wired, had been constructed at various points to meet local weaknesses or take advantage of local command of fire." \* Behind the most easterly



Haig's Advance on Cambrai, September 27 and 28.

of these trenches, at a distance of about 4,000 yards, lay a second double row of trenches, the Beaufort-Fonsomme line. The whole system, including defended villages, made up a defensive belt of from 7,000 to 10,000 yards in depth.

Sir Douglas Haig, noting that the positions confronting the 4th Army were the most heavily organised, decided to assist the assault on that sector by attacking first to the north while the southern half was being reduced by bombardment. On

\* Haig's Dispatch.

the night of the 26th September, while Marwitz and Einem were reviewing the situation caused by the attack of the 1st American and 4th French Armies, a heavy bombardment was opened on the whole front of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th British Armies, from the Scarpe to St. Quentin. At 5.30 on the following morning the 1st and 3rd Armies attacked with the Canadian 17th, 6th, and 4th Corps on the thirteen-mile sector between Sauchy-Lestrée (on the canal) and Gouzeaucourt. In front of the left of the attack was the Canal du Nord with its steep sides ; but on the extreme left it was too formidable an obstacle to cross in the face of the enemy. The canal had therefore to be crossed on a narrow front, and the troops had then to open fanwise and clear the canal to the north. In the half-light of dawn, the 63rd (Naval), 4th, and 1st Canadian Divisions stormed the canal line between Sains-lez-Marquion and Mœuvres, and advanced on Anneux, Graincourt, and Bourlon. The troops had been provided with scaling ladders ; but they seem generally to have dispensed with them, and to have descended one steep side and climbed the other without any help. The battle turned upon this operation, and the difficult manœuvre was carried out successfully. The 4th Canadians were held up some time near Bourlon Wood by the check to the 17th Corps on their right ; but, appreciating the necessity of relieving the situation, it attacked from the north side, and carried all the high ground, and pushed patrols to Fontaine-Notre-Dame. Meanwhile the 11th and 56th Divisions had crossed the canal and turned north, clearing their way almost to the Sensée. On the right the troops had also made good progress, the 3rd Division capturing Ribecourt and Flesquières, the Guards taking Orival Wood, and the 52nd, the famous Lowlanders, taking the high ground overlooking Graincourt. At the end of the day the troops had taken over 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns. The battle continued on the following day ; and Sailly, Palluel, Aubencheul-au-Bac, Fontaine-Notre-Dame, and Marcoing were occupied. At this last point they established themselves on the east bank of the Scheldt Canal.

But it was now time for the second and main part of the attack to begin. The garrisons of the German defensive system had been cut off from supplies for two whole days by the intensity and skill of the bombardment. At 5.50 A.M. on the 29th Rawlinson's 4th Army advanced to the attack on a front of twelve miles between Holnon and Vendhuile. A little earlier the 5th and 4th Corps of the 3rd Army had attacked between Vendhuile and Marcoing ; and, with Rawlinson, the 1st French Army of Débeney advanced. On the right of Rawlinson's advance the 46th (North Midland) Division, under Major-General G. F. Boyd, performed one of those feats which must live in the memory. About Bellenglise the Scheldt Canal turns sharply to the east. The angle was the key to the sector ; for once it was taken the troops could open fanwise, and, taking the positions north and south in enfilade, could clear the front of the neighbouring divisions. Some of these Midland troops crossed the canal on footbridges ; but others, finding no bridges at hand, dropped down the sheer sides of the canal wall, and, having swum or waded to the far side, climbed up the farther wall to the German trench lines on the eastern bank. " Having captured these trenches, the attacking troops swung to the right, and took from flank and rear the German defences along the eastern arm of the canal and on the high ground south of the canal, capturing many prisoners and German batteries in action before the enemy had time to realise the new direction of the attack. So thorough and complete was the organisation for this attack, and so gallantly, rapidly, and well was it executed by the troops, that this one division took on this day over 4,000 prisoners



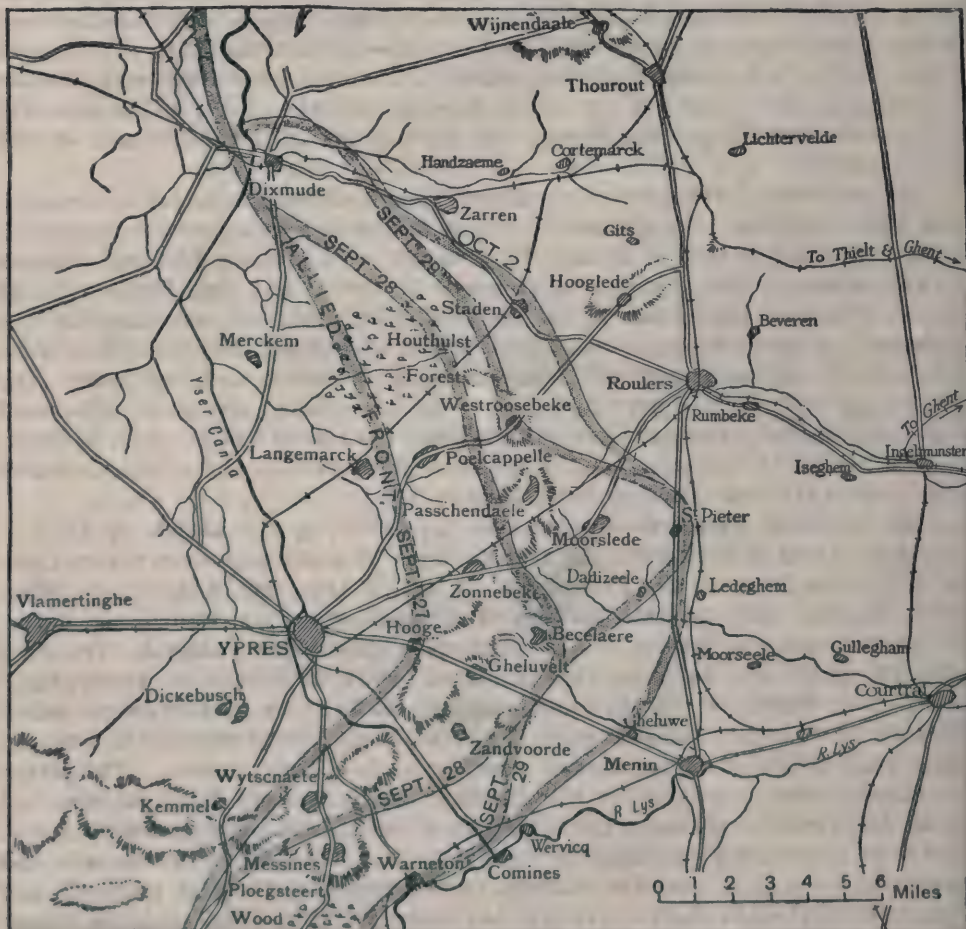
and 70 guns." \* The 32nd Division passed through the 46th, and took Lehaucourt and Magny-la-Fosse; and the 1st Division gained touch with them by a rapid advance across the Thorigny ridge, to the western end of the Le Tronquoy tunnel. North of the 46th the American 30th Division, under Major-General E. M. Lewis, breaking through the Hindenburg defences, seized Nauroy and Bellicourt; while Major-General J. F. O'Ryan's 27th American Division reached Bony, but could not reduce it owing to the machine-gun fire. The slopes above Vendhuile were cleared, and the 3rd Army captured Masnières, and secured the crossings of the Scheldt Canal between Masnières and Cambrai; while the Canadian Corps captured Sancourt, to the north of the city. The Australians of the 5th and 3rd Divisions, closely following the two American divisions, came in for severe fighting with the strong bodies who still held out in the Hindenburg system for many hours after the advance of the Americans.

In the advance of these three days a deep salient had been left, enclosing Gonnellieu and Villers Guislain. For the next two days the battle continued over the British front. On the 30th the gap already driven into the Hindenburg Line was enlarged by the capture of Thorigny and Le Tronquoy by the 1st and 32nd Divisions; and the Le Tronquoy tunnel was in the hands of the British. On the same day the Germans abandoned their positions in the salient about Gonnellieu and Villers Guislain, and the troops cleared the tunnel between Bellicourt and Vendhuile. The phrase fails utterly to convey any idea of the complicated operation. The canal was connected with the rear German trenches. The tunnel had provided an excellent shelter for the Germans, and only in one or two places had a high explosive shell pierced the roofing and let in the light of day.

**The Battle of Flanders.**—But on the day preceding the attack by the 4th Army, the third of the converging attacks began on a front of some twenty-three miles between Dixmude and Ploegsteert. It was the third day of the general offensive. The first day, the 26th, had involved some forty miles, west of the Meuse. The second day, the 27th, added about thirteen miles below Cambrai. The third day, the 28th, saw this Anglo-Belgian attack, which added another twenty-three miles; and Rawlinson, on the fourth day, the 29th, added another twelve miles. Thus in four days the different parts of the Allied plan fitted together to build up three main blows, involving almost ninety miles in a heavy attack. The attack in Flanders was placed under the direction of the King of Belgium, who had under his command all the artillery and some divisions of the 2nd British Army, and some French divisions under General Degoutte. General von Armin, who had fought a most skilful defensive battle in the Ypres area in the year 1917, still had command of the 4th German Army; but when the British and Belgians struck they found him holding the front with less than five divisions. Between the Ypres-Zonnebeke road and Ploegsteert, Plumer alone threw nine divisions into the battle on the 28th; and hence, outmanned, outgunned, and outmanœuvred, Armin's front gave way. The morning was misty when at 5.30 the Allies went forward to the attack. On the Belgian sector, from the Ypres-Zonnebeke road to Dixmude, a four hours' bombardment destroyed the wire; but the 14th, 35th, 29th, and 9th British Divisions, who continued the battle line to the south, attacked without any preparatory bombardment. And the Belgian coast had been deluged with shell from the sea. On both sectors of the battle the attack achieved a brilliant success. The

\* Haig's Dispatch.

four British divisions, assisted, later in the day, by the 41st and 36th, passed far beyond the limits of the 1917 battles, and reached and captured Zandvoorde and Becelaere. Farther south the 31st, 30th, and 34th Divisions captured Wytschaete, established themselves along the ridge as far as the canal, north of Hollebeke, and reached the outskirts of Messines. The Belgians, on the north of the British, captured Zonnebeke and Poelcappelle, and cleared the whole of Houthulst Forest.



The Allied Advance in Belgium.

The Germans attempted, on the following day, to check the advance; but, beating off all counter-attacks, the Allies continued to advance. The Belgians captured Dixmude, Paschendaale, and Moorslede, and reached the Roulers-Menin road, while the 2nd Army captured Messines and pressed forward towards the Lys. The battle continued during the next two days in this water-logged and shell-pitted area, and by the evening of 1st October the Belgians were east of the line Dixmude, Staden, and Moorslede, and the British were near Ledeghem, Gheluwe, and Wervicq, and had cleared the left bank of the Lys from Comines southwards. This signifi-



cant advance, which placed the two important centres, Roulers and Menin, in imminent peril of capture, had been achieved at light cost. Ludendorff's anxieties had become critical, for with so great a part of the line under attack, there were too many points calling for urgent reinforcement at the same time. Armin lost some 15,000 prisoners and over 300 guns in the first days of the Flanders battle, and the German Staff saw that their tenure of the Belgian coast was nearing its end. Degoutte's French troops had entered the battle on the last day of September, and were to play an important part in the development of the campaign.

On this same day the battle was raging over almost the whole front between the sea and the Meuse. On the third day of the Champagne-Argonne attack the per-



The French Advance between Reims and the Ailette (September 28).

plexities of the German Command were increased by another attack on a critical sector. Generals Mangin and Guillaumat, the former commander in the Balkans, began to advance between the Ailette and the Vesle. Mangin struck with skill towards the rear of the Chemin des Dames. The two armies advanced against a heavy resistance. Eberhardt and Einem contested every yard of the ground they abandoned, and in two days the Allies had not advanced four miles. But the sector covered the great pivot of St. Gobain, and even these small gains could not be yielded without endangering the defensive on an extensive front. Mangin and Guillaumat pushed their way steadily forward. On the 30th Mangin had pushed the Germans over the Ailette, and his line ran by Braye-en-Laonnais to Bourg; while Guillaumat, capturing Reillon and Montigny, compelled the Germans to abandon the plateau north-west of Reims. On 1st October he was able to advance

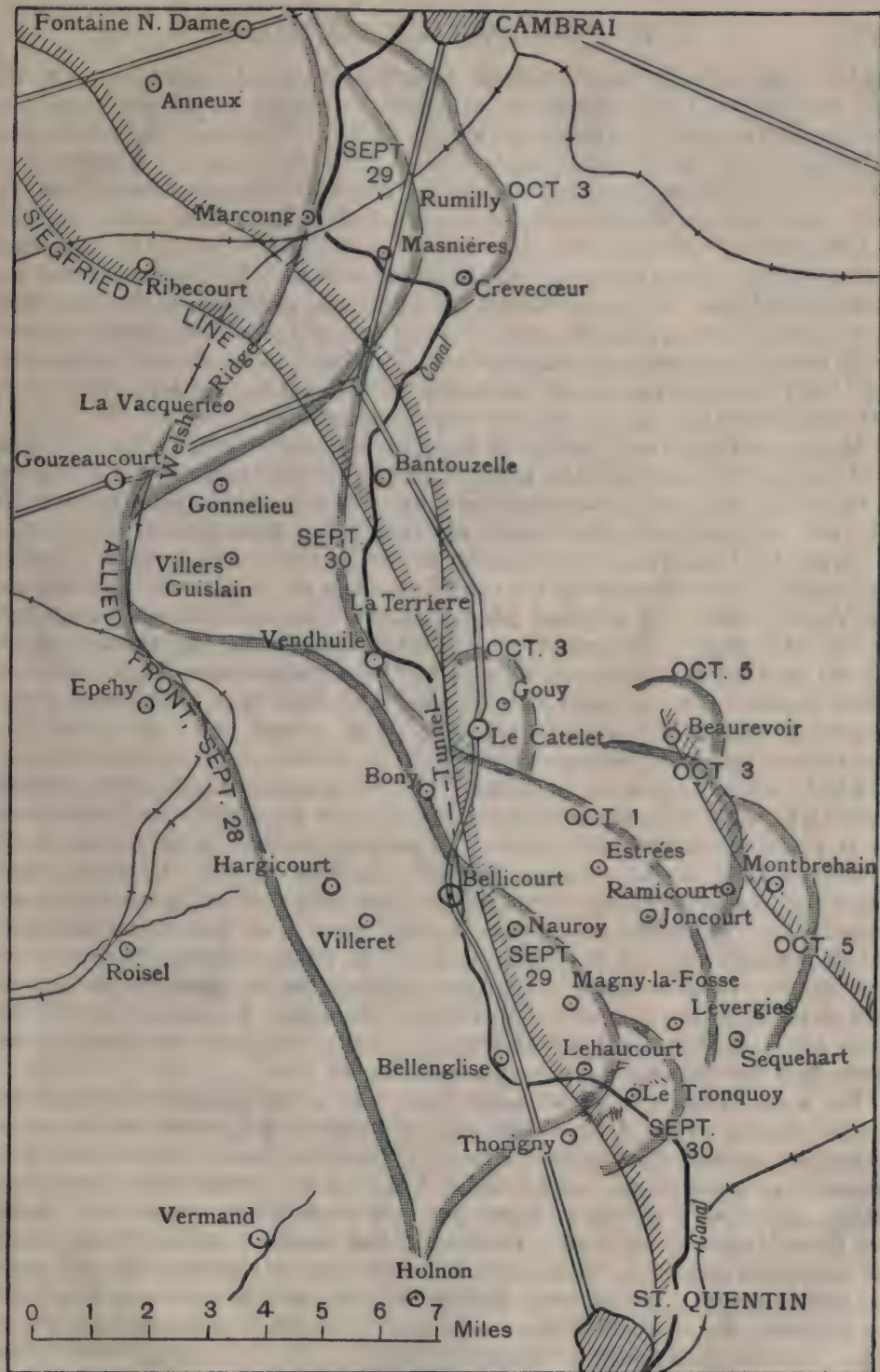
to the Aisne and lift his right above Reims to St. Thierry. It was on the 30th also that Gouraud's troops, continuing to press forward with Pershing's army, achieved an important success. After bitter hand-to-hand fighting, in which bayonets, clubbed rifles, and knives were used indiscriminately, they stormed the little hill of Mount Cuvelet, which, rising but some 500 feet above the neighbouring ground, gives observation over the whole country up to Vouziers.

But meanwhile the tense struggle in the centre was continuing. The British 3rd and 4th Armies had torn a hole in the Hindenburg defensive system, and they were devoting every effort to widen the breach. The Australian and 9th Corps attacked on 1st October in conjunction with Débeney's 1st French Army. Bony, which had resisted O'Ryan's 27th American Division, at length fell to the Australians, with Estrées and Joncourt; while the 32nd Division occupied Levergies. The British troops were pressing north-east of St. Quentin, and Débeney took advantage of the situation to deliver a thrust towards the south rear of the city. The Germans read the signs correctly, and the rearguards began to withdraw. They penetrated the dead and ruined city up to the canal, and on the next day (2nd October) they took formal possession. Far away to the north the other great city which had proved so long a lodestar to the Allies still resisted. The brilliant advance of the Canadians had attracted a heavy concentration against them. The men were weary with four days' continuous fighting, but it was decided to strike again. The men again went forward behind a skilful barrage, but had to yield much of the ground gained in immediate counter-attacks. Since the opening of the battle on this sector of the front the Canadian Corps had engaged ten German divisions, taking 7,059 prisoners and 205 guns. The successful advance constituted a direct threat to the rear of the troops on the north, and a withdrawal now began. On the following day the Germans began to evacuate Lille, and to retire on a wide front north and south of La Bassée. Lille was being outflanked by the Flanders advance. Cambrai was outflanked by the Canadians, and their position threatened the whole of the Douai sector. The bulk of the Siegfried Line had been crossed, St. Quentin had fallen, and the British were advancing against the last organised lines before Beaurevoir and Fonsomme. Gouraud was nearing the final lines, the Brunnhilde system. The retirement on 2nd October which permitted Birdwood's 5th Army to enter La Bassée, where no English foot had trod for four years, and Aubers gave only a local and temporary easement.

On the following day, Thursday, 3rd October, Rawlinson struck on the eight-mile sector between Sequehart and Le Catelet. Gouy and Le Catelet were taken by the 50th Division, and the 32nd took Sequehart. In between, the 2nd Australian Division advanced upon the Beaurevoir-Fonsomme line. The attack was delivered with tanks; but most of these were disabled before they could attack against the heavy wire of the two trenches. The Australians got through the line on this day, but it was not until the 5th that the high ground between Beaurevoir and Montbrehain was captured. The Germans now lay in a pronounced salient about the high ground of La Terrière, and they began to evacuate it, "with the result that on 5th October the right of the 3rd Army was able to cross the Scheldt Canal and occupy the Hindenburg Line east of it, thereby greatly simplifying the arrangements for our next attack." \* These readjustments mark the end of the first phase of the British offensive. "No attack in the history of the world was better carried

\* Haig's Dispatch.





The Allied Advance between Cambrai and St. Quentin (Sept. 29–Oct. 5).

out than that made on the Hindenburg Line near St. Quentin and Cambrai by the 4th, 3rd, and 1st British Armies on 27th-29th September. The enemy positions were most formidable. Nothing could stop the British. They swept right over them. It was a glorious day for the British arms." This is the considered judgment of Marshal Foch, speaking seven months later; and there can be no doubt that this battle, which carried the British armies completely through the Hindenburg defences, including the rear trench systems, was marked as much by its skill as by its courage and resolution. It was a far cry from the Battle of Loos. The British armies had learned their lesson. In the nine days from the opening of the attack they had taken over 36,000 prisoners and 380 guns. "The effect of the victory upon the subsequent course of the campaign was decisive. The threat to the enemy's communications was now direct and instant, for nothing but the natural obstacles of a wooded and well-watered country-side lay between our armies and Maubeuge." \*

Meanwhile Mangin and Guillaumat were pressing forward west of Reims. Soupir fell to a vigorous attack of the Italian Corps. But the thrust was now directed to the north-east, and threatened to leave the Laon-St. Gobain pivot in a salient. All previous attacks on the Chemin des Dames had been directed towards the north, and left the Germans the possibility of meeting the assaults frontally. Mangin was already a little advanced in the rear of the Aisne ridge, and with the capture of Condé and Cormicy, the 10th and 5th Armies struck in a direction which converged on that of Gouraud. The 4th Army had entered Challerange on the night of 2nd October, and thereby left the northern part of the Argonne forest in a pocket of the American line. The next day they seized and held Blanc Mont and Médéah Farm, securing an important point for observation of the ground up to the Aisne. The Moronvilliers *massif* was now in a pocket of Gouraud's left. On 4th October Pershing attacked once more west of the Meuse. The 1st American Army had to advance against a network of defences with concrete walls built across the roads; but attacking at 5.30 in the morning they made good progress through the approaches to the Kriemhilde Line, the last organised defensive system in the area. Bullard's troops, comprising regulars and men from Illinois, Wisconsin, West Pennsylvania, and Virginia, had the hardest task in the Argonne, where trees were felled and wired, and the barriers defended by machine guns. The 1st Army had made barely any progress since the second day of the battle which began the general offensive, and even on this day they advanced nowhere over three miles. The struggle for Hill 240 in the Aire valley lasted well into the evening; but by that time the Americans had bitten deep into the outer defences of the Kriemhilde Line.

But a significant change had taken place west of the Argonne. Gouraud had reached the line of the Arnes stream the night before, and on this day he struck westward, capturing St. Etienne à Arnes. Under this pressure the Germans were compelled to evacuate the heights which had been the centre of the Champagne defence, and those from which Reims had been so ruthlessly bombarded. Mudra and Einem began to withdraw. Guillaumat had crossed the Aisne-Marne Canal, and seized Bermericourt. That night fires were seen on these terrible hills north and east of Reims. The following day the Germans withdrew between Reims and the Argonne. By nightfall Reims was at length relieved from the torment of four years. Guillaumat crossed the Suipe at Orainville. The Reims heights were either occupied or surrounded. The Moronvilliers *massif* was once more in French hands,



and the 4th Army was across the Arnes. This success marked a definite stage in the development of the general offensive. The German left centre had given way. The Germans could not expect to hold the Chemin des Dames under such conditions, or even the St. Gobain pivot and Laon; and indeed it was not many days before all were abandoned. But these purely military developments were put into the background by the sudden request of the new German Chancellor for an "immediate armistice."

**The Request for an Armistice.**—We have already seen that despite the boasts of German statesmen and the clumsy pose of victor relenting at the cost of the struggle, the soldiers knew that all was over. From that great victory of 8th August, Ludendorff saw that all the Germans could hope for was to make reasonably good terms; and he hoped it would be possible to secure good terms before the military situation deteriorated beyond the possibility of concealment. It was for this reason that, in the conferences with the Chancellor and Foreign Secretary on 13th and 14th August, he asked for an immediate attempt to open negotiations. The results of these urgent representations we have also seen. Ludendorff saw the weeks pass without any sincere attempt to negotiate peace as the need for it daily became more imperative. At length the general offensive began, and Ludendorff could wait no longer. On the third day, when the defences in Flanders were being pierced, he requested the Government "*immediately* to open peace negotiations, and with this end in view to *propose an armistice.*"\* On the following day Hintze and Count Rodern were summoned to General Head Quarters, and the position was placed before them. Hertling, the Chancellor, had resigned; and Hintze pointed out that, the Government being compromised at home and abroad, the peace offer had better be made by a new Government possessing the confidence of the people. He apparently could not bring himself to the confession of defeat which a request for an armistice would imply. And neither did Hertling's successor like the task. The Kaiser asked Count Rodern to take steps for the formation of a new Government, and he went back to Berlin for the purpose with a representative of General Head Quarters to give any information of the military situation to the chief members of the Reichstag. They only left Spa on the evening of the 29th; but Ludendorff's anxiety about the battle can be gathered from the fact that on 1st October he telegraphed to his representatives to induce Payer, the Vice-Chancellor, to make a speedy peace offer: "The Chief Army Command having taken this decision, it must insist upon there being *no loss of time.*" Payer represented the difficulty of acting on his own initiative, and asked whether the peace offer could not be deferred.

To this question came the extraordinary reply: "Provided that a guarantee can be given between seven and eight o'clock this evening that Prince Max of Baden is forming the Government, then I agree to postponement *until to-morrow morning.* Should there, however, be any doubt about the formation of the Government, I must insist that the declaration be made known to the foreign Powers *to-night.*" This telegram, signed by Hindenburg, was dispatched at 1.30 P.M. on 1st October. Whether this statement is to be interpreted as insisting upon an armistice *within twenty-four hours* or not, it certainly clinches the proof that the military collapse was prior to that of the people, and not *vice versa*. Further negotiations ensued, and Payer sent a *questionnaire* to Hindenburg. On 3rd October Hindenburg gave verbal replies.

\* Statement by Colonel Bauer in the *Vossische Zeitung*.

To the question, "How long can the army hold the enemy the other side of the German frontiers?" Hindenburg said he could not answer it in that form. "But *it is to be hoped* that they may protect the *German soil to next spring*." Asked whether a "collapse" was to be expected, he replied no, "as long as valuable reserves are at hand." \* The fourth question was, "Is the Chief Army Command aware that a peace move, under pressure of the critical military situation, may lead to the loss of German territory—namely, Alsace-Lorraine and the purely Polish districts of the Eastern provinces?" And to this he replied, "*Unless things should change*, the Chief Army Command will take into consideration the surrender of small French-speaking portions of Alsace-Lorraine. For it there is no question of the cession of German territory in the East." We cannot resist a certain sympathy with the German generals. They had confessed as plainly as possible that they had failed, and that they could do no more. But the German politicians insisted upon them wallowing in their humiliation, and there human nature revolted. Hindenburg, in a meeting with the Ministers, again stated that, rather than surrender any considerable part of German territory, Germany must fight, losing all rather than honour. But Rodern pointed out that this was a soldier's view. A statesman must save all that could be saved.

The statement made by the representative of General Head Quarters to the party leaders of the Reichstag at 9 A.M. on 2nd October destroyed any lingering illusions about the situation. The defection of Bulgaria had led to the diversion of some of the troops from the East, whence the last men capable of bearing arms had been withdrawn. Two factors had had a decisive influence on the decision of General Head Quarters: *tanks* and *reserves*. The former caused "local panics," and hence "enormous losses in prisoners." As to reserves, "in spite of using every possible device, the strength of our battalions sank from about 800 in April to 500 by the end of September. And these numbers were only secured by disbanding 22 infantry divisions and 66 infantry regiments. The current reserves, consisting of men who are convalescent, combed-out men, etc., will not even cover the losses of a quiet winter's campaign. The inclusion of the 1900 class will only increase the strength of the battalions by 100, and *that is the last of our reserves*." † . . . Every day brings the enemy *nearer his goal*." It must have required some courage to make this statement; and, allowing for the conventions of the situation, we can see how the High Command acknowledged its utter bankruptcy. Tanks, at which they had sneered, "decisive." *Moral* gone! Reserves, which were to have secured a complete victory, exhausted!

Prince Max of Baden arrived in Berlin on the afternoon of 1st October. But the Grand Duke of Baden's assent had to be secured for his acceptance of the Chancellorship. The Kaiser's special train was intercepted at Cologne, and his request was telephoned to the Grand Duke, who assented at midnight. Then followed negotiations about the terms of the peace Note. Prince Max wished to issue a peace programme in his inaugural speech in the Reichstag. But this proposition was unanimously rejected. Not another twenty-four hours' delay could be tolerated; and hence under pressure of the generals the famous Note of Prince Max was telegraphed on the night of the 4th, on the eve of the Reichstag meeting. The Note stated that the German Government "accepts the programme set forth by the

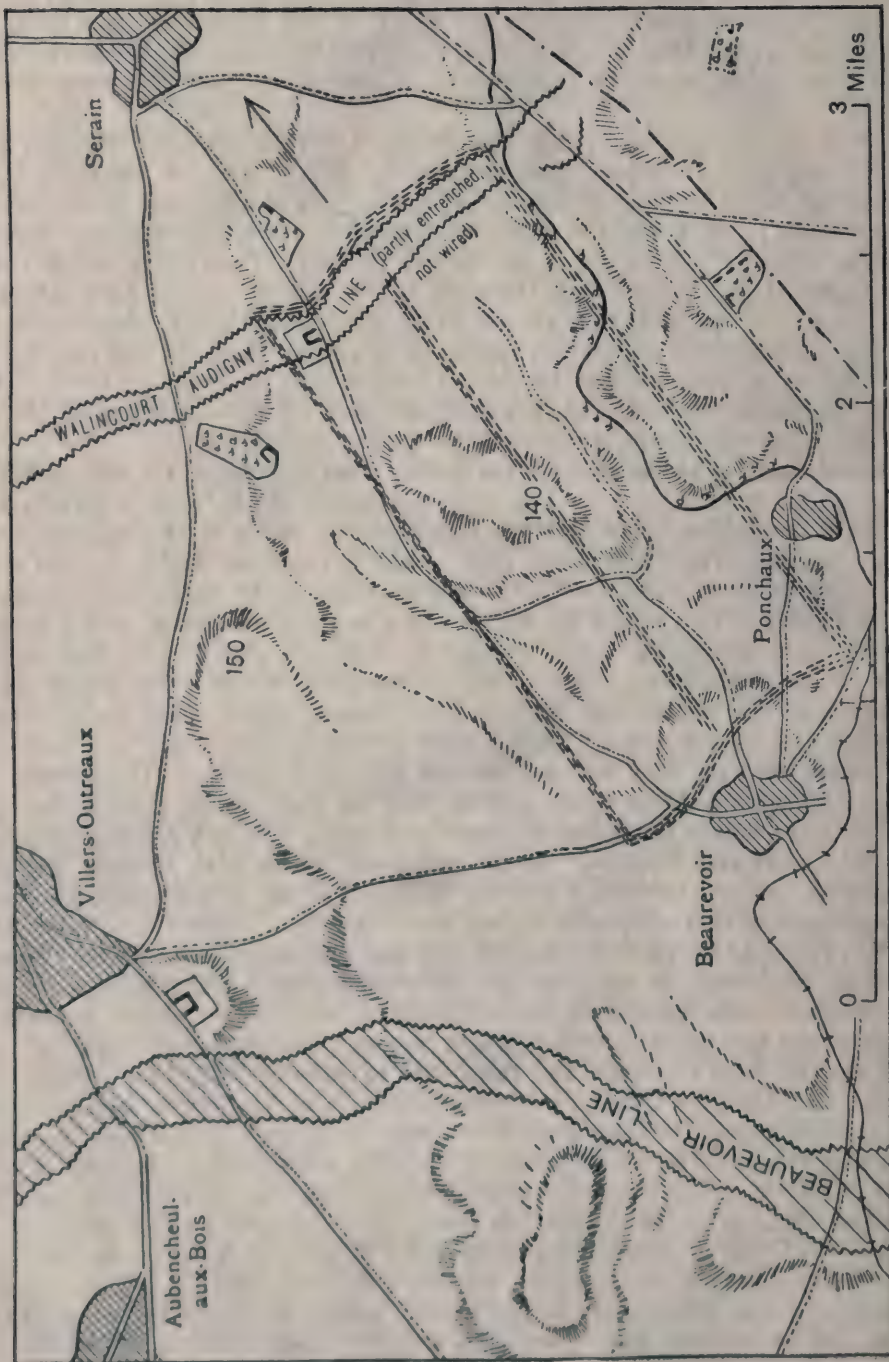
\* His representative told the Reichstag the day before that they had come to the last of the reserves.  
See †.



President of the United States in his message to Congress on 8th January, and in his later pronouncements, especially his speech of 27th September, as a basis for peace negotiations. With a view to avoiding further bloodshed, the German Government requests the *immediate conclusion of an armistice* on land and water and in the air."

While the German Chancellor and President Wilson discussed this question the military situation rapidly improved for the Allies. The 1st American Army west of the Meuse had begun to feel the disadvantage of advancing on one side of the river only; and in order to gain more manœuvring room, French and American divisions attacked east of the Meuse on 8th October. Consenvoye and Brabant were captured, and, farther east, Haumont and Beaumont. About 3,000 prisoners were taken. At the same time the 1st Army, now under Liggett, advanced in the Argonne, and stormed the plateau north-east of Autry. Gouraud was pressing up the Aisne to its junction with the Aire. Farther west he advanced north of the Arnes, supported by tanks, while Guillaumat beat off the onslaughts of Mudra, who was vainly endeavouring to recover the Suippe bridgeheads.

**Second Battle of Le Cateau.**—On the British front Haig began the Second Battle of Le Cateau, striking on a front of over seventeen miles between Sequehart and the south of Cambrai, while Débeney continued the attack to the neighbourhood of St. Quentin. There still lay in front of the 3rd and 4th British Armies some incomplete defences, consisting of the continuations of the Beaurevoir-Fonsomme line to Lesdain. This village lay in the valley of the Esnes brook, and it formed a particularly formidable centre of defence. Villers-Outreaux, some four or five miles to the south, was another powerfully organised village. The attack began in drenching rain on the 8th, the 3rd Army striking before dawn, forty minutes in advance of the 4th Army. The two armies struck with such skill and resolution that before nightfall they had got through into open country. The German resistance temporarily broke down, and the men fell back rapidly towards the east. The last loose ends of the defensive system gave way. The 30th American Division took Brancourt and Premont. Serrain was taken by the 66th Division, lost and recaptured. Villers-Outreaux fell to the Welshmen of the 38th Division, who, with the assistance of tanks, captured it after heavy fighting. Lesdain was captured by the New Zealand Division with a number of tanks; but the 3rd, 2nd, and 63rd (Naval) Divisions, who fought to the north and brilliantly captured Seranvillers, Forenville, and Niergnies, were engaged in heavy fighting all day. These villages lie south of Cambrai, and near to the Cambrai-Hirson railway. Captured, they tended to outflank the city from the south, and threatened to interrupt one of the railway connections with the main German communications. A heavy German counter-attack was delivered against this sector of the line with tanks, some of them being captured British machines. The troops fell back until the guns could be brought to bear upon the tanks, when a number were destroyed and the advance was resumed. The 57th Division on the extreme left made further progress towards the southern outskirts of Cambrai. Some miles to the north Horne's 1st Army on the same day pushed through the Rouvroy-Fresnes line, and in the two following days approached to within striking distance of the last western defence of Douai, the northern end of the Drocourt-Quéant line. Douai was brought a step nearer its fall on the 9th by the skilful advance of the 22nd Corps of the 1st Army across the Sensée marshes. The junction by this operation was threatened from the south.



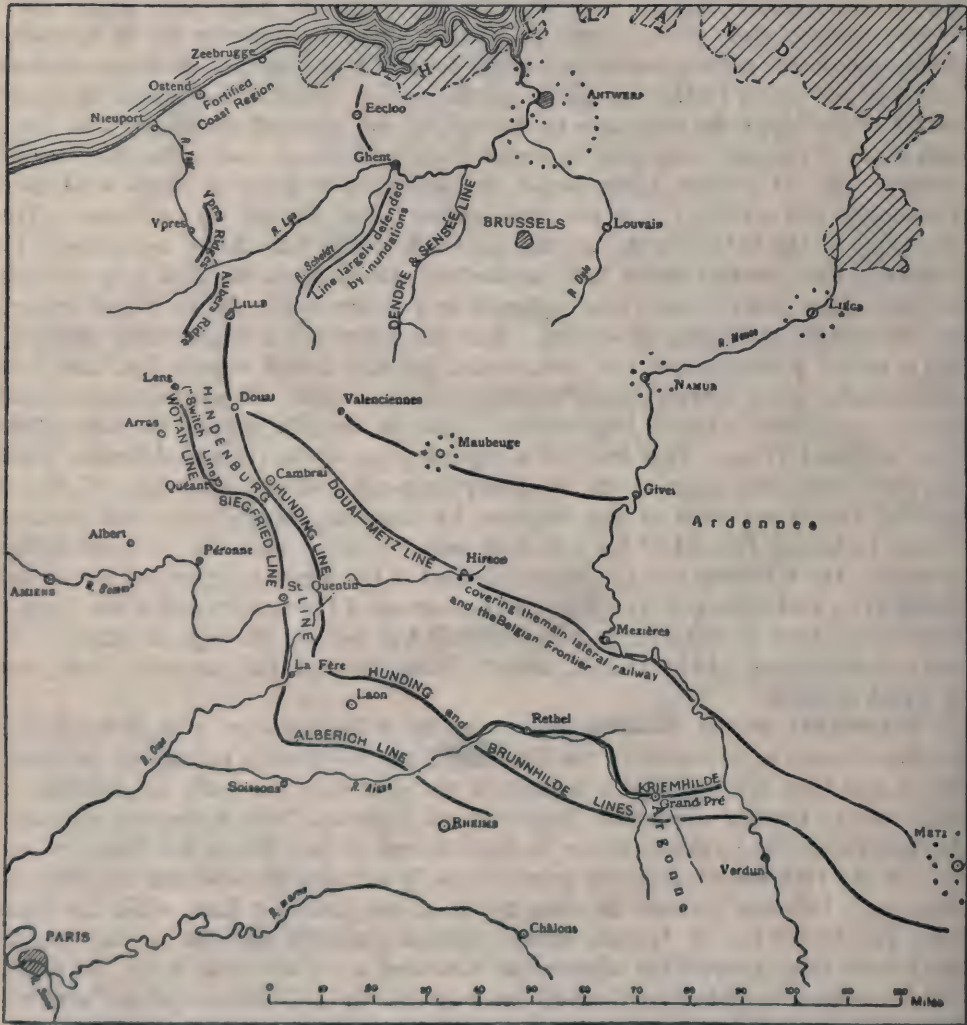


In the early morning of this day Cambrai fell. The Canadians captured Ramillies,\* crossed the Scheldt Canal, and entered the city from the north as the patrols of the 57th Division worked through it from the south. It was still night when the troops met in the chief square; but the city was on fire in several places, and the men showed up ghostly in the half-light. The city was not seriously damaged, though the houses had been pillaged when the civilian population were evacuated. The battle was resumed before dawn, and cavalry began to make their appearance. It was owing to their pressure that the Germans were driven over the St. Quentin-Busigny-Cambrai railway before they could destroy it, and the line made an excellent source of supply for further operations on this sector. West of Le Cateau the Canadian Cavalry broke the resistance in the woods. By nightfall the troops were three miles east of Cambrai, and only two miles from Le Cateau; and under this forceful advance the 1st French Army found the resistance in front of them weakened. Fonsomme was captured, and the Oise-Sambre Canal reached up to Bernot. The third day of the battle (10th) saw the approach to the Selle River completed. Le Cateau, where Smith-Dorrien had checked the Germans in the first flare of their advance, four years before, was captured, and to the north the river was crossed by the troops swimming or wading. But the resistance had gradually stiffened. Some 12,000 prisoners and 250 guns, and a first-rate lateral supply line, had been taken, and a pause was necessary to prepare a new attack. Meanwhile Liggett had struck again after a heavy bombardment, and on the 9th pierced the Kriemhilde Line at Cunel Wood. This line was a typical piece of the German defensive lines, heavily wired, with concrete and steel emplacements and deep dug-outs. Gouraud assisted the attack west of the Argonne by capturing Montcheutin and pushing nearer to Grand Pré, while his left flank seized Cauroy, near the Vouziers-Rethel railway. The following day the Americans east of the Meuse co-operated, advancing up the river and seizing Sivry. Liggett then attacked the western end of the Kriemhilde Line about Grand Pré, and by nightfall had pushed through the thickets to the neighbourhood of the village, and the defile through the Argonne at the end of which it stood.

**Withdrawal to the Hunting Line.**—On the following day, 11th October, the Germans began to withdraw to the Hunting Line. Gouraud's passage of the Arnes brook had been decisive, and a struggle in the open was too costly an experiment. Guillaumat's cavalry crossed the Retourne and approached the Aisne west of Asfeld. Mangin forced the Germans nearer to the east end of the Chemin des Dames ridge; and on the 12th the advance was pressed rapidly between the Oise and the Western Argonne. Débeney crossed the Oise north of the Hunting Line, while his right wing penetrated the St. Gobain forest. Mangin captured the rest of the Chemin des Dames ridge, crossed the Ailette, and advanced along his whole front. At nightfall his right was at Berrieux, nearly six miles north of Corbeny, and his left only two miles south of Laon. Guillaumat crossed the Aisne at Neufchâtel and captured Asfeld. Gouraud pushed the Germans northward to within three miles of Rethel, and reached Attigny. The next day the advance continued. Gouraud entered Vouziers, while Débeney and Mangin completed the capture of the St. Gobain forest. About ten o'clock in the morning Mangin's vanguard mounted the little plateau on which Laon lies and entered the city. It was little damaged, and the beautiful cathedral was intact. The people gave Mangin an enthusiastic welcome when he

\* This is not the town which was the scene of Marlborough's battle.

arrived to put an end to the tyranny which had sent off the mayor, with the last deportation of young men to Germany, "as a hostage!" Far to the north, Horne's army had broken through the northern end of the Drocourt line, and were now on the outskirts of Douai. The Germans were striking vainly against the British bridgeheads on the Selle and the American positions north of Verdun. It was a great day. "The battle which began in Champagne on 26th September," wrote



German prepared Positions and more or less fully entrenched Lines, Autumn of 1918.

Marshal Foch, "has come to an end, after seventeen days' fighting, with the complete defeat of the enemy. . . . The total number of prisoners taken by Gouraud's 4th Army alone amounts to 21,567, including 499 officers. It has also captured over 600 guns. . . ."

**The Battle of Flanders (Second Phase).**—The Battle of Flanders had died down



while the communications were reorganised in the Ypres area, and after extraordinary exertions they were now sufficiently restored to justify a resumption of hostilities. General Armin had shown his anxiety about this front by his frequent counter-attacks; but he was prepared for the worst. Ostend was held only by rearguards, and the bulk of the coastal guns had been withdrawn. On the night of the 13th the coastal sector was attacked by monitors; and on the following morning, when the Allies attacked in a thick mist at 5.35, the monitors co-operated by covering the rear of Armin's front with shell. The attack was delivered on the



The Advance on the Coast.

twenty-eight-mile front between Dixmude and Comines, the British operating as far north as St. Pieter, on the Menin-Roulers road. On their left lay the Belgians as far as the Ypres-Roulers railway, between which and the Ypres-Cortemarck-Roulers railway lay four French divisions with light tanks. Belgian divisions operated on the left of the French. The concentration took place under a heavy German bombardment with gas shells. The Germans had been heavily reinforced, and they held strong positions, many of them being the entrenched relics of the 1917 defence.

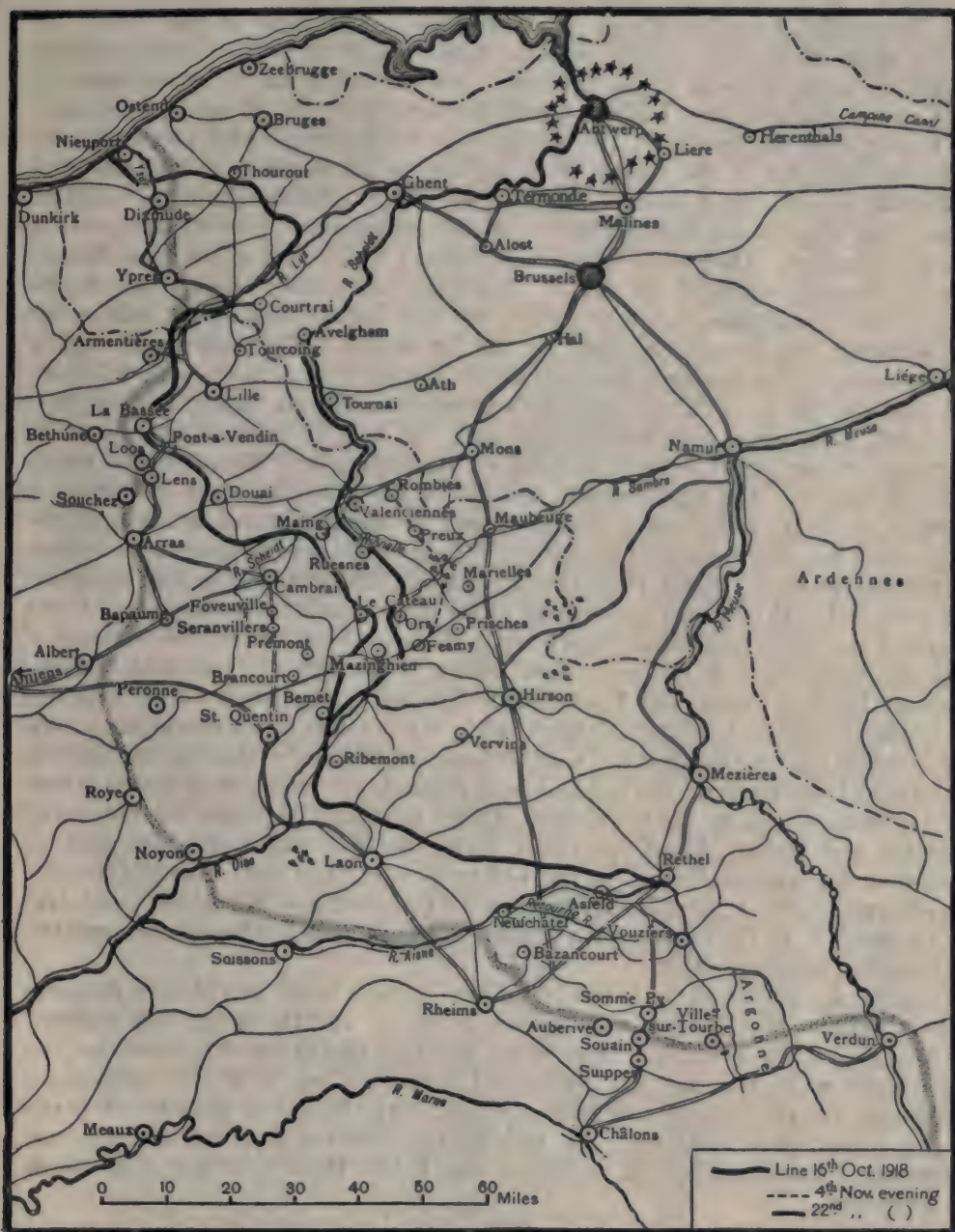
The attack was a brilliant success. The British pushed their line forward to the high ground overlooking Wervicq, Menin, and Wevelghem, and farther north

advanced some four miles to Gulleghem. On their left the Belgians captured Iseghem, and approached the Ingelmunster railway; while the French, pushing over hilly ground, crossed the Thourout-Roulers railway, entered Beveren, and surrounded Roulers. Farther north the Belgians crossed the Handzaeme Canal and captured Cortemarck. The following day Thourout was surrounded; Lichtervelde fell; and Comines, Wervicq, Menin, and the northern part of Courtrai were occupied. The Allies had captured 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns; and the defensive seemed unable to rally. On the 16th the British were on the Lys to a point nearly three miles north of Courtrai, and began to cross it. The French were advancing on Thielt, and the Belgians began to cross the Yser towards Ostend. Despite a heavy downpour of rain the advance was still rapid. On the following day, 17th October, Ostend was occupied. Reconnoitring destroyers began to approach in the morning, and an aeroplane landed amid great enthusiasm. A naval party made a temporary landing just before noon; but it was withdrawn as the German guns began to shell the coast and threatened to play havoc with the civilian population. That afternoon the Germans fell back, and the troops entered Ostend from the south. Later in the evening the greatest enthusiasm was caused by the arrival of the King and Queen, who, after a short visit, returned to Dunkirk. The Allies continued to press forward, and by the 20th their left flank rested on the Dutch frontier, running east of Maldeghem, Lootenhulle, and Oxyghem, to the Lys.

**The Battle of the Selle River.**—These memorable days had seen other moving scenes. The Americans were continuing to move up the Meuse and to push through the Kriemhilde Line. On the 14th, Romagne Wood and the village itself were captured, in spite of the persistent rain of gas shells. Two days later they captured Grand Pré, and, working through the last fringe of the woods, entered Champigneulle. Liggett could now move forward on Buzancy without the constant check on his left flank. On the 17th they were at the edge of the Bois des Loges, above Grand Pré, a position which inherited the evil design of the main mass of the Argonne forest. There were movements on many parts of the front on this day, which saw Gouraud's right achieve contact with Liggett's left. Mangin captured Notre-Dame de Liesse, north of the camp of Sissonne, and the central armies all lay before the Hunding Line defences. It was the day Ostend fell, and the results of the Flanders advance, taken with the victorious thrust of the 3rd and 4th Armies below, had begun to appear. The 8th Division entered Douai, and the 57th and 59th Divisions reached the outskirts of Lille. Both cities lay in a deep salient, and the advances on the flanks made a withdrawal imperative. Haig was resuming his advance. The Selle River lay in his path. With the fate of this river line, and the subsidiary lines of the streams Ecaillon and Rhonelle in its rear, was bound up the future of the whole German front between Rethel and the coast. If these rivers could be held, there lay to the north a possible line of resistance on the Scheldt. If they could be held it would not be difficult to hold the 1st, 10th, and 5th French Armies. But if they were forced, the Scheldt would be turned from the south, and the Mormal Forest from the north. Débeney, with the Germans in front of him outflanked, would press eastward, turning the Hunding Line from the north, and the Germans would be compelled to fall back to the frontier.

At 5.20 A.M., over an hour before sunrise (17th October), Rawlinson struck on a ten-mile front south of Le Cateau. The Germans were holding their positions in strength, and the British, advancing with the 30th and 27th American Divisions,





Stages of the Allied Advance.

met with an obstinate resistance. Débeney, farther south, pressed two miles nearer to Guise. It was only after two days of heavy fighting that the British achieved the line of the Aisne-Oise Canal, south of Catillon, and north of that village the valley of the Richemont. On the 20th the second phase of the battle began with an attack by seven divisions of the 3rd Army, and the 4th of the 1st Army, north of Le Cateau. The first phase had half turned the line of the Selle. It was now necessary to force it with this leverage. The preparations for the attack were very elaborate. The two brigades of the Guards each required eight footbridges, and the guns and tanks required other bridges. We must leave these achievements to the imagination. The river banks were slippery from the recent rains; but the troops were nothing daunted. Their tasks were accomplished; and at 2 A.M. the battle began, and was fiercely contested throughout. The tanks successfully crossed, and despite the stubborn resistance the troops seized the high ground east of the Selle as far as Romeries and Denain (occupied by the 1st Army). The troops were rapidly reorganised, and on the 23rd the main attack on the Selle positions was delivered. At 1.20 A.M. the 1st, 6th, 25th, and 18th Divisions of the 4th Army, and the 33rd, 21st, 5th, 42nd, 37th, New Zealand, 3rd, 2nd, and 19th Divisions of the 3rd Army attacked on the fifteen miles front between Mazinghien and Maison Bleue, north-east of Haussy. The unfavourable weather of the preceding days had made it difficult to locate the German batteries, and the troops suffered much from the artillery in the earlier stages of the battle. "Despite this, and in spite of determined opposition at many points from the German machine-gunners, in two days our infantry and tanks realised an advance of six miles over difficult country. About many of the woods and villages which lay in the way of our attack there was severe fighting, particularly in the large wood known as the Bois l'Evêque and at Pommereuil, Bousies, Forest, and Vendegies-sur-Ecaillon. This latter village held out until the afternoon of the 24th October, when it was taken by an enveloping attack by troops of the 19th Division and 61st Division. At the end of that day the western outskirts of the Forêt de Mormal had been reached, our troops were within a mile of Le Quesnoy and, to the north-west of that town, had captured the villages of Ruesnes and Maing. Local operations during the following three days gave us Englefontaine, and established our line well to the north and east of the Le Quesnoy-Valenciennes railway, from the outskirts of Le Quesnoy, past Sepmeries and Artres to Famars." \* In the battle 20,000 prisoners and 475 guns had been taken, and the Scheldt line began to totter.

On the second day of the battle (18th) the Germans began to withdraw from the salient between the Flanders and Cambrai advances, and the troops had encircled Lille at 5.30 in the morning. Later in the day that city of dreadful memories, the Manchester of France, met the invasion of British soldiers with wild enthusiasm. Birdwood, the commander, was later presented with the flag of the city. But the troops pushed steadfastly on. The 40th Division entered Roubaix, and the 51st Tourcoing. Four days later the Germans were behind the Scheldt line as far north as Avelghem.

\* \* \* \* \*

By this time the peace negotiations were considerably advanced. On 6th October, when the first request for peace became known in Berlin, the people went mad with joy. Simple souls! In 1914 they had been delirious about the war; and

• Haig's Dispatch.



pastors and journalists had murmured the anthem, "How wonderful are these days," and gushed about the "fresh merriness of war." "Peace at last," was the cry on this day. On the 8th, Wilson replied in a Note which was more searching than the Allied peoples realised at the time. He wished to know whether the German Government "*accepts*" the terms laid down by the President, and that its object in entering into "discussions would be only to agree upon the practical details of their application." Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and Payer emphatically did not mean this, and Payer had lost his temper when the point was suggested before the dispatch of the first Note. On the 12th, however, this bitter pill was swallowed, and the answer declared, "The German Government has *accepted* the terms." They were also ready to evacuate the occupied territories, as Wilson also suggested. Indeed, the armies would have liked nothing better if they had still retained the power to disengage. But that moment had passed. On the 14th, Wilson replied: "The *unqualified* acceptance . . ." justified the President "in making a frank or direct statement. . . ." The "present military supremacy" of the Allied armies must be guaranteed by any armistice, and he must point out that the Allies would not consider the suspension of hostilities "as long as the armed forces of Germany continue the illegal and inhuman practices," such as the sinking of passenger vessels, and the pillaging or depopulating of evacuated cities. Furthermore, he was pledged to the destruction or rendering impotent of "every arbitrary Power anywhere that can separately, secretly, and of its single choice, disturb the peace of the world." On the 20th the German Government replied to this Note. They were quite prepared for arrangements which would guarantee the safeguarding of the relative position of the opposed armies. They protested against the charge of illegal and inhuman methods of warfare, but had ordered that no further passenger ships should be torpedoed. The offer of peace had come from a Government "free from any arbitrary and irresponsible influence." Mr. Wilson's reply traversed very skilfully all that had been agreed, including the "*explicit* promise . . . that the rules of civilised warfare will be observed on land and sea by the German armed forces," and stated that he was submitting the correspondence to the Allied Governments, so that, if they agreed to make peace on such terms, their military advisers might draw up a suitable instrument for an armistice. He further stated that "it is evident that the German people have no means of commanding the acquiescence of the military authorities of the Empire in the popular will." The point was clearly grasped by the German Government, who at once passed a Bill subordinating the military command to the civil power, an act which led to Ludendorff's resignation \* on 27th October. But already the first fruits of Wilson's pointed remarks had begun to appear. On the 24th Liebknecht was released from prison.

It was at this moment, when the German Government was showing its readiness to accept almost any humiliation in order to gain an armistice, when Haig's armies had approached the last obstacles which stood between them and an advance along the Sambre to Maubeuge, when the central armies were beginning seriously to test the defensive power of the Hunding Line, and the Americans were pressing northwards astride the Meuse, that the last Italian offensive began.

\* The resignation was withdrawn at Hindenburg's request; but Ludendorff had, on the previous evening, countersigned an army order which was in flagrant conflict with the government's submission to President Wilson. He was summoned to the Kaiser, and after a bitter interview resigned.

## V. THE DISRUPTION OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY.

THE Germanic Alliance was already a bankrupt concern, which the trustees were vainly endeavouring to liquidate with some show of honour, when the Italians began a very remarkable battle. It was bound to be decisive. Bulgaria had abandoned her Allies and left Austro-Hungary's southern boundaries open to invasion. Whatever the immediate effect, it could not be long before the Allied armies would begin to knock at that door ; and this vast new liability fell upon the armies which had failed in their last attack upon Italy. Compelled to defend an extensive new front, Austria-Hungary could not be expected to withstand a vigorous onslaught from the armies which, some five months before, had defeated her. No sufficient help could be expected from Germany, whose armies were reeling from defeat towards disaster. The requests of the German Chancellor for an armistice, confessed beyond ambiguity how precarious the military position was regarded ; and, as we have seen, this shadow play, which was all that the outer world saw at the time, represented the resultant of two tendencies : the *military* insistence upon the necessity of an immediate armistice, and the reluctance of the *politicians* to prejudice their chances of an honourable peace by a confession of such weakness. Even this does not show the sum of those factors which foredoomed the Austro-Hungarian armies to decisive defeat. Allenby was on the threshold of Aleppo, and every front, except the Italian, seemed crumbling to pieces. The moral effect of these several conditions upon the troops of an empire formed of a loose conglomerate of races differing fundamentally in temperament and ideals could not fail to be great. Among the peoples of the Dual Empire it had already led to revolutionary movements. In the era of national armies the national organisation is apt to fail with defeat. In Russia it had been the case. In Bulgaria the same process had been followed, and in a few days the Tsar Boris was to follow his father into exile. In Austria-Hungary, as in Russia, the final term had to be disruption ; and the first steps had already been taken before the Battle of Vittorio Veneto opened. On 19th October the Rumanian deputies in the Austrian Parliament turned themselves into a Rumanian National Assembly. The next day Count Karolyi introduced a Bill for the complete separation of Hungary from Austria. On the 22nd it was the turn of the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, whose central executive committee took control of their political destiny. The following day a Hungarian National Council and a Hungarian Assembly were formed at Budapest.

Austria-Hungary was in the throes of disruption, and in the midst of it Diaz began to hammer at the lines which the Austro-Hungarian soldiers held in Italy. The wonder is that they did not give way at once. Instead, the emergence of an immediate duty in a situation whence all the familiar landmarks had disappeared, seemed to sober the people for the moment. The Croats revolted in Fiume on the day the battle began, and there were riots in Croatia on the 27th and 28th. For two days the battle seemed as if it might offer the cement of a new unity. But the rifts were too deep. The Czechs took over control of Prague on the 28th, and on the 29th the Czecho-Slovak republic was declared. It was on the same day that Hungary declared itself independent, and opened relations with the Czechs and Yugo-Slavs. On 30th October the Austro-Hungarian Empire was in ruins. Military insurrections had broken out in Vienna and Budapest, and in Vienna a republic was proclaimed.



The Croat Parliament at Agram, in agreement with the Hungarian Diet, declared the separation of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia from Hungary. And the German-Austrian deputies notified President Wilson of the formation of the German-Austrian state. It is necessary to remember these facts, since they constitute the background against which the last Austro-Hungarian battle was staged. It still remains one of the most puzzling episodes of the war, this competent and resolute defence of an army formed from a number of races, when their political organisation was falling to pieces, and when so many developments must have suggested to them that the cause they represented was beyond hope.

Diaz had defeated the Austro-Hungarian army in June, and had resisted the temptation to deliver an immediate counter-offensive. His reserves were low, and he knew that his opponent was not so weak or disorganised that he could hope for a decisive success. It seemed better to limit strictly the counter-attack and concentrate for a counter-offensive at a more opportune moment. The question whether this should have limited objectives or be *à outrance* he left for circumstances to decide. While he prepared for an attack on the Asiago plateau, he also developed his plans for a decisive battle if the general situation should permit. On 13th August, an assault in the area of the Tonale Pass, where the Trentino looks westward, was so vigorously checked that Diaz felt the necessity of feeling his way carefully. He had only fifty-seven divisions, including three British, two French, and one Czecho-Slovak, against the sixty-three and a half divisions of the Austro-Hungarian armies, now rested, re-formed, and re-trained since their defeat in June. Successive "combing-out" had alone supplied the losses of the June battle, and created a reserve of drafts. There were 100,000 men in Albania, and we have seen that they were barely sufficient to hold the Salonika left wing; 55,000 men in Macedonia, and 48,000 in France. The 1900 class of recruits were not to be used until the spring of 1919. No one could know in the middle of August that the war would end during the year, and hence General Diaz had to act with caution in view of the possibility that the Germans might still allocate sufficient troops to strike a final blow at Italy. His plans were therefore laid for a limited offensive to be begun about mid-September. But when the moment approached, the Balkan front was beginning to shake under the first shock of the Allied offensive; and on the 25th September the position was sufficiently clear to induce Diaz to abandon his attack at Asiago and make an attempt to breach the Austro-Hungarian front decisively. "The fundamental idea of the action planned by the Comando Supremo was to separate the Austrian mass in the Trentino from that on the Piave by a decisive break through, and then, by an enveloping action, to bring about the fall of the whole mountain front, which would cause, necessarily, the complete yielding of the enemy's front in the plain."\*

Between the Brenta and the sea, the 4th Army of Lieutenant-General Giardino, the 8th Army of Lieutenant-General Caviglia, and the 3rd of the Duke of Aosta, had originally held the line; but they were now separated by two new commands: the 12th Army of General Graziani (commanding the two French divisions), and the 10th Army of General the Earl of Cavan (commanding the British forces in Italy). There were thus five armies between the Brenta and the sea, and the greater number gave increased elasticity of action. In the rear were the 9th Army of Lieutenant-General Morrone, comprising some six divisions; and the Cavalry Corps, commanded by His Royal Highness the Count of Turin. Of the fifty-seven

\* Report by the Comando Supremo on the Battle of Vittorio Veneto.

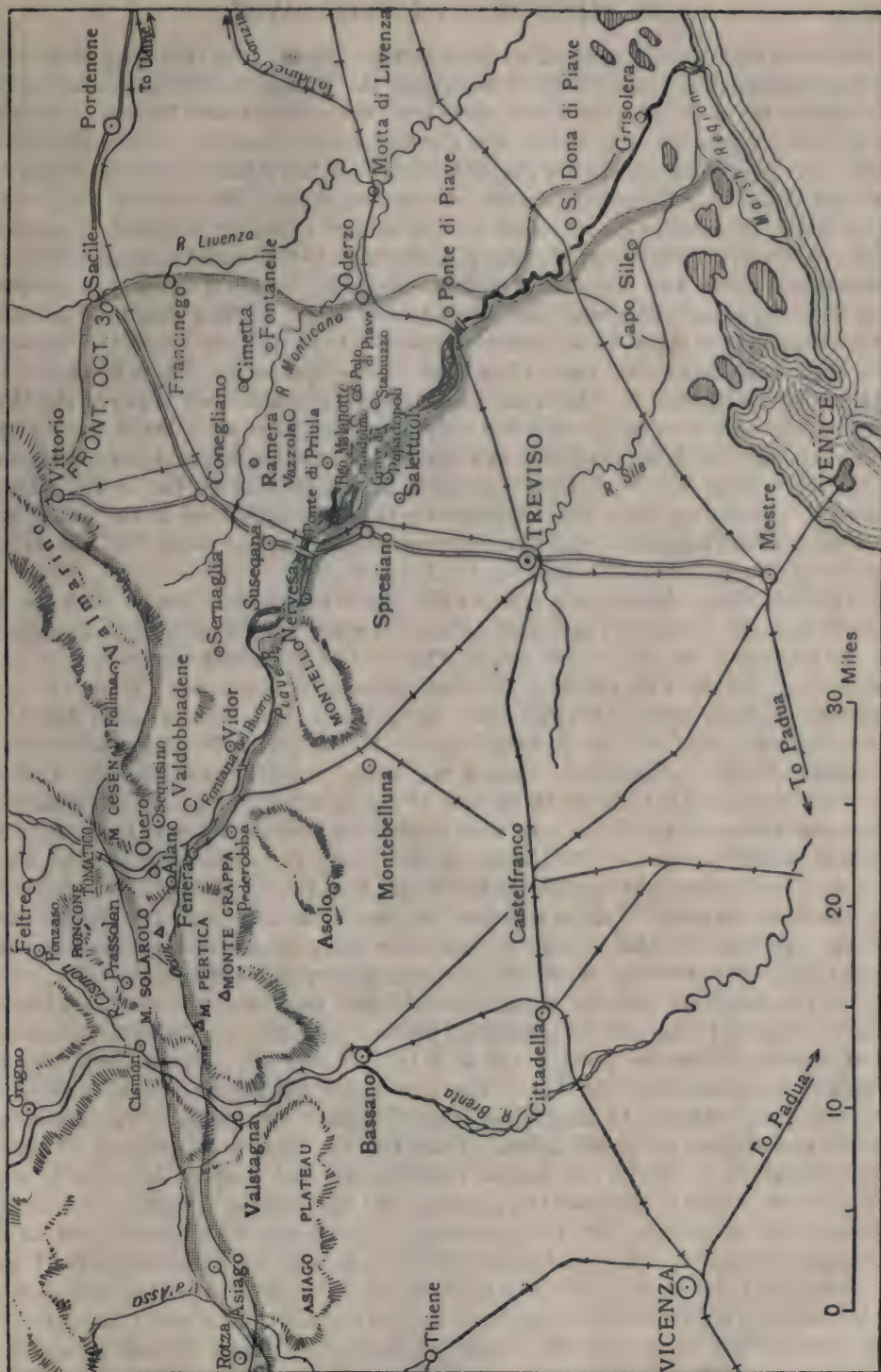
divisions at his disposal, Diaz had placed twenty-two in the front line in the sector to be attacked, and there were ten infantry divisions in reserve, besides the six of the 9th Army (under the orders of the Supreme Command), and four cavalry divisions. There were therefore nearly four-fifths of the total force concentrated on or about this sector between the Brenta and Ponte di Piave. The forces made up the 4th, 12th, 8th, and 10th Armies, which constituted the mass of shock. Along the sector occupied by them a vast accumulation of artillery was concentrated, in all some 4,750 weapons of all calibres, including about 600 heavy trench mortars, with about 5,700,000 rounds of artillery ammunition—eight days' supply. There were also great accumulations of bridging material. Each soldier was to carry three days' rations, and five days' supplies were concentrated at the crossings. "The enemy's defensive system was formidable. It was constructed in successive lines in the Grappa region, where it had the advantage of dominating positions, and in battle-belts, according to the so-called 'elastic system of defence,' along the Piave. These battle-belts, formed of centres of resistance distributed according to the accidents of the ground, and in such a way as to support one another, were grouped in two successive positions: the first, about one and a half miles deep from the left bank of the Piave, and covered by advanced trenches on the Grave di Papadopoli, was called the 'Kaiserstellung'; the second belt, situated nearly two miles in the rear, was called the 'Königstellung.'"<sup>\*</sup>

In spite of the torrential rains and the supreme necessity for secrecy in the preparations, all the changes in the dispositions of troops and artillery had been completed by 10th October, and all was ready for the opening of the battle on the 16th, as originally arranged. Bulgaria had now left the enemy Alliance, and the Allies were fast approaching the Danube. The political atmosphere was all that could be desired; but the rains had caused the Piave to rise, and the weather had become so bad that it became obvious that the attack could not begin until about the 24th. The delay, however, gave the Italian Command time to increase still further the artillery concentration on the sector of attack. Already 1,600 guns and 500 trench mortars had been taken from other sectors of the front. Another 400 guns were now collected and placed behind the sector between the Brenta and the Piave. Diaz accepted to the full the risks he was incurring by thus denuding the rest of his front, and bent all his efforts to smashing the Austro-Hungarian front decisively. The 4th Army was now to take a more important part in the offensive, striking first, and by its hammer blows attracting the enemy reserves from the Arten-Feltre gorge. The 12th Army was to advance across Monte Grappa on Feltre, moving astride the Piave. The 8th Army, which was cast for the main rôle, was to cross the Piave and advance rapidly on Vittorio, the centre of the communications of the 6th Austro-Hungarian Army. The troops would then strike to the left and complete the breach between the armies in the mountains and those in the plains. The 10th Army was to advance eastwards towards the Livenza and form a defensive flank for the 8th Army.

When at length the Battle of Vittorio Veneto began on 24th October, the anniversary of the Caporetto battle, the atmospheric conditions were as bad as they could be. There was an intense bombardment between 5 and 7.15 A.M., and then in a dense fog the 4th and 10th Armies began to attack. The fog turned later into a heavy rain, and the assistance of the artillery was therefore limited. The 4th

<sup>\*</sup> Report by the Comanda Supremo on the Battle of Vittorio Veneto.





The Area of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto.

Army soon found itself involved in most bitter fighting. An attack on that sector was to be expected, since it was obvious that the Italian Staff would endeavour to strengthen the frail buttress which alone held the enemy from the plain. The 6th Army, west of the Brenta, which still had one British and one French division in order that the enemy should not guess the change in the Italian dispositions, assisted the 4th Army by conducting a series of vigorous raids; and the left wing of the 12th Army attacked with it. Asolone was rushed; but the storming troops fell under a withering fire from machine-gun nests in caves, and the peak had to be abandoned under the pressure of counter-attacks. Monte Pertica was stormed, but the troops there, also, were compelled to fall back. Farther east the Lombardy brigade enveloped the Solarolo summits, and the Aosta brigade seized the Valderoa. They were unable to scale the vertical walls of the Spinoncia. The left wing of the 12th Army descended into the Alano basin and established itself north of the Ornic stream. In this most severe fighting only 1,300 prisoners were taken, and, at the end of the day, with the exception of a few surface abrasions, the Austro-Hungarian defensive system was much as it had been at the opening of the battle. Monte Sisemol, near Asiago, had been captured by the French division in the 6th Army; and the Austro-Hungarian Staff had been encouraged in their belief that the Italians meant to attempt a break through on the Grappa sector.

The 7th Army should have entered the battle twenty-four hours after the 4th Army, but the renewed rains and broken weather necessitated a postponement of the attempted crossing of the Middle Piave. But meanwhile the 10th Army had carried out a skilful preparation for their crossing of the river. While the guns were still roaring north of Grappa, the "2nd/1st battalion of the Honourable Artillery Company, and the 1st battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, without any previous artillery preparation, crossed the main channel, surprised the Austrian garrison, and occupied the northern half of the island" \* of Grave di Papadopoli. The main stream of the Piave runs west of the island which occupies the bulk of the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles which separate the two banks of the river. The British were ferried across the river by Italian boatmen during the night, and, taking the garrison by surprise, captured the majority of them and beat off counter-attacks from the eastern bank. At the same time Italian troops of the same army occupied Cosenza, Lido, and Caserta, three of the other small islands which occupy the centre of the river.

On the following day the British consolidated their positions on the island of Grave, in spite of some difficulty from the force of the river. In the narrower channel of the Middle Piave the current ran at a rate of over six miles an hour, and the "fords" were over five feet deep. The crossing of the 8th Army was impossible; but the 4th continued to attack north of Grappa. The struggle was again very bitter, and despite the fierce ardour of the Italians, little was achieved. Coldella Berreta was seized by the 9th Assault Detachment; but a skilful Austrian counter-attack forced them to abandon the position, and they fought their way back against an encircling movement with 600 prisoners. Pertica was stormed and held after a six hours' struggle by the 18th Assault Detachment, and two regiments of the Pesaro Brigade; and the Bologna Brigade took Monte Forcellata. But the resistance on Solarolo could not be broken; and with Pertica and Forcellata, and 1,400 prisoners, the Italians had to be content. Reserves from Feltre and Belluno began to be involved, and this was the one hopeful feature of the battle, which continued on

\* Lord Cavan's Dispatch.



the 26th, and yielded only a further 1,200 prisoners. But by the evening the weather had improved, and the fall of the river induced General Diaz to order the 8th Army to attempt a crossing. The troops constructed seven bridges across the river, but so strong was the current and so accurate the fire that only two of these, in the bend of the river above the Montello ridge, were completed. The 12th Army constructed a bridge at Pederobba, and the 10th Army three at Grave di Papadopoli. The main thrust was still, on the 27th, undeveloped. Three bridgeheads had been established: one on the 12th Army sector about Valdobbiadene; a second in the Sernaglia plain; and the third by the British 14th Corps and 11th Italian Corps. The last alone was firmly established across the river. Borgo Malanotte was seized, lost, and recaptured by the British; and at nightfall they had captured 3,520 prisoners, while the 11th Italian Corps had taken 2,100. The 23rd British Division had gallantly rushed six 9-inch howitzers. There was a wide gap between Cavan's left and Caviglia's right across the river. The 8th Corps had not succeeded in crossing, and it had been entrusted with the decisive rôle of advancing on Vittorio.

The fifth day of the battle broke on such conditions. Apart from the 10th Army, whose function was purely subsidiary, no success of any account had been achieved. The night had been given to the repair of bridges; but the 8th Army bridges were all swept away by shell-fire or the current, and the troops of the 27th and 22nd Corps had to be supplied across the river with food, blankets, and small-arm ammunition by means of aeroplanes. General Basso's 18th Corps was now sent from the 8th Army reserves to cross on the 10th Army front; and the Como and Bisagno Brigades, crossing at Salettuo, advanced in the direction of Conegliano and relieved the right flank of the 8th Army. The 12th Army advanced astride the Piave, stormed Alano, and captured the heights north of Valdobbiadene. The 10th Army, with some cover for its left flank, now began to widen the first breach in the Kaiserstellung (Kaiser position), and advanced eastward towards the Monticano. This was the first day upon which any one could discover a trace of success. There were now three bridgeheads across the river, and the 10th Army was firmly established on the eastern bank. The battle began to show a glimpse of the thought which had shaped it. With the 10th Army attacking towards the east, and the 8th and 12th Armies advancing north-east and north, the first hopes of dividing the Austrian armies appeared. On the 29th the Italian Alpini and French troops seized Monte Cosen, a high peak dominating the Quero gorge and the Feltre basin, and this success of the 12th Army lightened the task of Caviglia's troops. This army now began to play an important part in the battle. The 8th Corps at length got across at Ponte di Priula and advanced on Susegana, which was taken. Basso's 18th Corps, which had advanced four miles on the 28th, now reached Conegliano, and sent the Firenze Lancers and Bersaglieri Cyclists towards Vittorio, which they reached in the evening. The 10th Army had sent out its patrols to the Monticano on the preceding evening, and the British were through not only the Kaiserstellung, but also the Königstellung (King's position), while the 11th Italian Corps was beginning to threaten the flank of the troops holding the line opposite the 3rd Army. The 23rd (Bersaglieri) Division of the 11th Corps passed to the direction of the 3rd Army in order to clear its left flank, while a mobile column of British cavalry, with infantry, rapidly crossed the Monticano by the bridge on the Vazzola-Cimetta road. The capture of the bridge "saved us many hours of delay in pursuit." \*

\* Lord Cavan's Dispatch.



Development of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto.



The 4th Army was still heavily engaged with the Austrian counter-offensive north of Grappa, attracting more reserves, though apparently achieving little success. By nightfall the bulk of the 6th Austro-Hungarian Army had been driven into a narrow salient of difficult ground between the 8th and 12th Armies. The total number of prisoners taken by the 4th, 7th, 8th, and 10th Armies was now 33,000, and on the morrow the Italians began to reap the fruits of six days of heavy fighting.

The 12th Army occupied Segusino and reached Quero. The 8th Army advanced beyond Follina, swung to the left, and rapidly advanced towards the junction of the valleys at Belluno. The 1st Cavalry Division entered the battle on its right, advancing towards the Livenza at Sacile. The 10th Army crossed the Monticano on a wide front. "Very gallant work was done by the 8th battalion Yorkshire Regiment." \* The decisive nature of the success now began to appear, and "from this moment the defeat became a rout." On the preceding night a junior officer had attempted to open negotiations for an armistice; but as his authority was not sufficient, General Diaz brushed the movement aside. On the same day the Austro-Hungarian Government appealed to President Wilson to negotiate an armistice. On the 30th, when the first symptoms of rout had begun to appear, there had been military insurrections in both capitals of the Empire, and on that evening General von Weber, Commander of the 6th Corps, was allowed to pass through the Italian lines, under a white flag, with his Staff. The following day they were conducted to Padua, and negotiations began. Meanwhile the battle continued. While General von Weber was approaching Padua the 3rd Army was entering the struggle. The Bersaglieri Division pushed southward and cleared the Austrians from the Piave as far as S. Dona di Piave; and the 3rd Army then crossed and advanced boldly to the Livenza, with the 10th Army on its left. The 4th Army at length began to advance, overwhelming the Austrian rearguards. Late on the preceding evening the Austrian *communiqué* had stated that the troops "fighting on Italian soil will evacuate the occupied region," and it was a retreating army which Diaz had now to deal with. The 4th Army, in its rapid advance, occupied Monte Roncone and sent its patrols to Fonzaso and Feltre. To the north-east, Belluno was threatened with envelopment. The 10th and 3rd Armies reached the line of the Livenza, and the Italian cavalry crossed the river towards the Tagliamento. Meanwhile the 11th Austro-Hungarian Army had abandoned the Asiago basin under the attacks of the 6th Italian Army, and had retired to its "Winterstellung" (winter position). Fires were noticed behind the lines on the 30th, and the army, though depleted of men and guns for the sake of the offensive, began to advance with great vigour. On 1st November the 1st Army was ordered to advance on Trent; and the Austrian mountain armies began to find themselves enveloped in detachments. The 4th Army blocked the retreat from the Asiago front by its advance up Val Brenta, and with the 12th and 8th Armies began to surround the troops in the Feltre area.

From 1st November the resistance of the Austrians became a matter of detachments. The troops knew that an armistice had been asked for, first on the 29th, and secondly on the 30th of October, and very naturally the resistance ceased to be organised. The fighting from this time onwards ceased to be an affair of military science, severe though it was at certain parts. The 6th Army ruptured the front of the 11th Austrian Army, west of the Brenta, though the 48th British Division

\* Lord Cavan's Dispatch.

found itself held up nearly the whole of the day at Monte Interrotto. Prisoners were taken in tens of thousands, and almost all the artillery on the Asiago plateau. Even the 1st Army, holding a front of thirty-six miles with five divisions, began to advance rapidly up Val Lagarina. At 8 P.M. on the 2nd the Arditi and Alpini entered Rovereto; and at 3 P.M. the next day the Alessandria Light Cavalry entered Trent, thereby cutting the communications from Brenta to Lake Garda, and putting an end to organised resistance if such had been intended. A divisional general who was captured on the 2nd by the British 48th Division was voluble in his indignation at being taken when there was an armistice. The 7th Italian Army, lying west and north of Lake Garda, entered the battle on the afternoon of the 2nd, and joined hands during the night with the 1st Army in the Riva basin. And this was not yet "Italian soil," though it was so to become. On this day, 3rd November, the Italians occupied Trieste without opposition from the sea. But the armistice was already signed. After communication with Paris the terms had been finally submitted to the Austrian delegates, and were signed by them at 6.30 P.M. on 3rd November. The armistice came into force on the following day at 3 P.M. By that time 300,000 prisoners had been counted, and more than double the number had been cut off. It is idle to compute these figures. The Austrian defeat was complete; but the main feature of this offensive is the splendid resistance made by the Austro-Hungarian armies when their Empire was in ruins. They exacted a heavy price from the victors, for the total casualty list was 33,000, the 4th Army supplying over 20,000 of these, and the 10th Army 5,000.

The end of the war was very near, as none knew better than the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The terms of the armistice were as abject as any signed by any army; but they cease to have any burning interest from the fact that Austro-Hungary had been out of conceit with the war for nearly two years, and the Emperor Karl paid with his Crown for his loyalty to his Ally. There is a certain pathetic magnificence about this young man who thus stood nobly to a bond which, in effect, made him a bankrupt. Too readily, nowadays, it is the fashion to interpret loyalty in materialistic terms, to be a virtue only so long as it pays its regular dividends. It is also too easy to forget that, on the whole, the Austro-Hungarian rule was just and fair. The Empire itself was a survival. Racial spirit runs too deep in these days to submit to alien dictation, even where it is, on a balance, fair. It was not the Emperor Karl's fault that he inherited so uneasy a legacy, and we cannot but remember that his motives were single. In the anarchy which succeeded his rule no one profited, and the solutions which shall give peace and prosperity to his former subjects are still to seek. General Diaz won a great victory, but the impartial student will wonder still why it took so long to achieve when it was virtually a foregone conclusion. The collapse of Austria-Hungary has its chief relevance in the repercussion upon Germany. The last days of her military dominance had come.

## VI. THE MAELSTROM.

As the war dragged on it tended to involve everything in its awful destruction. Few places in the world escaped its track. Either in actual bloodshed, in wealth poured out, in intrigue or treachery, it invaded almost every land. From the implications of the "nation in arms" theory it struck at the distinction between



combatant and non-combatant, and threw over both the shadow of a common peril. Indeed, the civilian's case was in many respects the worse. A soldier relative of the writer openly professed his preference for the battle front when the German aeroplanes began to bomb London. The civilian population had to lie still within doors while the sweet droning of the bombing planes sounded clearer and clearer, until the guns began to thunder and the bombs fell. Night after night the German aeroplanes visited England during the winter of 1917-18. Some people fled to the country to escape the nerve-racking experience. Many retired to the underground railways as soon as the warning was sounded, and lay about the platforms. At times there were local panics at the underground stations.

Compelled to remain at a great height owing to the barrage, the aeroplanes could not hit their mark except by accident. At times they came strangely near to their objectives. The façade and entrance to St. Pancras Station was once badly damaged. On another occasion six bombs were dropped at intervals in a road but six feet from the main London and North-Western Railway line out of London. In the earlier raids the aeroplanes made bad play with their bombs. Thus, in 1915, the Benchers' Buildings in Gray's Inn Road, the Examination Hall of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, the hall of the Worshipful Company of Butchers, Lincoln's Inn Hall, the Law Courts, and *Morning Post* office were damaged. The Royal Artillery parade ground and Grand Depot Barracks received thirteen bombs at the same time. But the strange predilection for law and medicine could not have been the *jeu d'esprit* it seemed. The Royal Mint suffered on June 13, 1917. Charing Cross Hospital Medical School, the Savage Club, and the Hotel Cecil were damaged on September 4, 1917, when 270 feet of the Victoria Embankment was torn up, and a tramcar wrecked. The Ministry of Munitions suffered on the same occasion. On the 24th of the same month the Royal Academy, Royal Society, Berkeley Hotel, and Turf Club were injured. The War Office and Scotland Yard were hit on December 6, 1917, and the Admiralty on January 28, 1918. With the exception of these last mentioned, the hits were not military objectives; nor could they be justified by the desire to cause panic. They were merely the results of chance. At a great height an aeroplane travelling at a varying speed, and disturbed by a copious if not accurate bombardment, can only reach its objective by chance; and towards the end of the war the protective "aprons," star-shells, and improved range-finders, made an aeroplane attack upon London too much of a venture.

But it is probable that the inauguration of the Independent Air Force, with its nightly long-distance raids into German territory, had much to do with the cessation of attacks. And apparently their effect upon the Germans was worse than that upon the British. Some of the British aeroplanes sought their way through a protective force of German machines to their destinations, and then calmly descended until they were sure of reaching their objective. Indeed, so great was the effect that the Germans attempted, in October 1918, to limit air attacks to "important hostile military objects within the immediate area of operations of war;" and on 4th November protested to Mr. Wilson that the Allies were not conforming to this limitation. They were getting the worst of the exchange, and very naturally wished to rule out the practice begun by themselves. It was the same with the use of poisonous gas, and it was the same with the war as a whole. As soon as they knew that they were definitely losing, they attempted to end the "useless slaughter." It was perfectly logical.

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On the seas, too, the civilian was liable to share the fate of the combatant, and the sinking of passenger vessels was only countermanded when the Germans were reminded by Mr. Wilson that it did not dispose the Allies to consider the request for an armistice. Up to 6th September, though hundreds of thousands of American troops were continually crossing the Atlantic, only four troopships had been torpedoed; and the losses, compared with the extent of the risk, were almost infinitesimal. The convoy system, skilfully developed, the multiplication of submarine chasers, the old device of the apparently helpless merchantman who was hammered mercilessly until the chance came for a decisive retaliation, depth charges, and nets in narrow waterways, took their toll of the submarines. On September 6, 1918, the British Admiralty announced that 150 of these pests had been disposed of, and gave the fate of their commanding officers. At the end of the war it was admitted in Germany that 196 had been sunk, and this is sufficient testimony to the versatility, skill, and resolution of the Allies, who scored such successes in so unequal a combat. But the successes of the U-boats were such that, though they did not weaken the Allies' military effort, they produced a great shortage of foodstuffs in the United Kingdom, and this might have reached a critical point if the Germans had begun a year earlier their unrestricted campaign. Up to September 1918 the Allied and neutral nations lost 21,404,113 tons of shipping, the vast bulk of this huge tonnage being due to submarines. In the same period the total construction was 14,247,025 tons. Of the 7,157,088 tons sunk in excess of construction, 3,795,000 could be written off, because that tonnage of enemy ships was seized. The net loss to the world's shipping was 3,362,088 tons. But the sinkings were gradually falling; and if the calls of the battle-front had not been so vast, the losses would not have produced so great an effect.

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There was another plane upon which an unlooked-for struggle occurred. When the Bolsheviks made peace with Germany, they became, in effect, Allies of Germany. But the Bolsheviks did not represent the whole of Russia. They had recourse in time to a tyranny and despotism which differed from that of Tsarish *régime* only in the personnel of those who exercised it. They were equally far from democracy, and crushed all their opponents with a ruthless hand. The same domiciliary visits were made, only now they were made by "Peter the Painter," and not the Tsar's police agents. With such a condition the Allies had no proper concern, except in so far as it directly aided Germany. They could not stand idly by and see the stores sent to a loyal Ally seized by the Germans. Nor could they forsake those Russian elements who still made common cause with them against Germany, and hence arose the landings at Archangel and Vladivostok. Gradually expeditions grew up about these centres with the object of forming foci for the loyal Russians and Czecho-Slovacs. When Germany began to filter through to the Black Sea and the Turks to press up into Caucasia, other possibilities arose above the horizon. The Transcaspian Bolsheviks, too, with their threat to Afghanistan, added a serious new menace to the British Empire. These latter were soundly beaten, and the threat passed. The Turkish ventures in Caucasia had a considerable effect upon the success of the Palestine campaign. Liman von Sanders directly attributed his defeat to the diversion of Turkish troops in this quarter. This was not the fact; but the absurd advance into Transcaucasia in the midst of the perils threatened



by Allenby's advance played no mean part in his success. A temporary anti-Bolshevik Government in Baku, on 25th July, asked for British assistance, and Major-General Dunsterville, the head of the relief mission in Northern Persia, the original—according to Mr. Edmund Candler—of Kipling's "Stalky," was sent there. He remained there less than two months. His small force fought vigorously against repeated Turkish assaults; but the Armenians and Russians were frail reeds to depend upon, and at length he had to retire into Northern Persia.

Far away to the south General von Lettow-Vorbeck, one of the truly romantic figures of the war, still fought on to the end of the war. His was an extraordinary personality; and it will ever be something of a miracle how he kept his little force together. When we bear in mind that another of the great leaders of the war, Smuts, had been in charge of the operations against him, and, later on, Van Deventer, we can form some picture of the man he was. On his return to Germany after the armistice he received a deservedly enthusiastic welcome.

## VII. THE LAST BATTLES.

HAIG's advance to the outskirts of Mormal Forest had not only compelled the German withdrawal to the line of the Scheldt River, which provided a good line of resistance, but it had also gravely weakened the Hunding Line, on which the armies of Eberhardt, Mudra, and Einem had fallen back. This line, from the defile of Grand Pré, stretched westward along the high ground north of the Aisne from Vouziers, by Rethel, (Château) Porcien, and Asfeld, where it left the river, continuing across the high ground to the Laon-Hirson railway near Dercy, and thence followed the Serre River. On 24th October, when the main attack in the Selle battle was delivered, and the Italian battle of Vittorio Veneto opened, Débeney, Mangin, and Guillaumat began to assault the Hunding Line. In effect, the line was more like a great pivot, since it lacked continuity to the north, where Débeney was already east of its termination, and the 1st French Army began to strike, in the afternoon, south-eastward from Ribemont towards Crécy on the Serre. They at once formed a local salient in the line, and compelled the Germans to fall back north of Villers-le-Sec. On the following day the whole line, some forty miles, between the Serre and the Aisne, was engaged, and the French by this converging attack began to advance. Mangin's left pushed up to the Souche stream and crossed the marshy area towards Marle, while Guillaumat fought his way north between Sissonne and Porcien. On the 26th the Germans gave way in front of Débeney, and on a fifteen-mile front between the Oise and the Serre he advanced rapidly. Mangin captured Mortiers, near Crécy, and Guillaumat continued his advance between Sissonne and Porcien for two miles. The Hunding Line was now in some jeopardy, and during the afternoon the 5th Army was repeatedly counter-attacked with great violence. On the 27th, Débeney was in some places five miles from his starting-point between the Oise and the Serre, and Mangin had now secured Crécy, while Guillaumat, against a heavy resistance, continued to press northward east of Sissonne. The French 5th Army had penetrated the formidable Hunding Line, but the Germans for the time checked his advance by employing fresh reserves.

**The Battle of the Sambre.**—At the end of the month the centre was for the

moment stabilised. Turkey had now joined Bulgaria. Austria had collapsed, and Germany's military position was beyond hope. "If her armies were allowed to withdraw to shorter lines the struggle might still be protracted over the winter. The British armies, however, were now in a position to prevent this by a direct attack upon a vital centre, which should anticipate the enemy's withdrawal, and force an immediate conclusion." \* The capture of Valenciennes was an indispensable preliminary to the main battle, and at 5.15 in the morning of the 1st November the 17th Corps of the 3rd Army, and the 22nd and Canadian Corps of the 1st Army, attacked on a six-mile front south of Valenciennes. Their way of advance was crossed by the Rhonelle; but after a stubborn resistance, the 61st, 49th, and 4th Divisions crossed the river, captured Maresches and Preseau on the east bank, and established themselves on the high ground beyond. The 4th Canadian Division attacked north and south of Valenciennes. One brigade with the 3rd Canadian Division crossed the river south of the city, wheeled north, reached the Maubeuge railway, and then crossed to the high ground east of Valenciennes. The other brigade of the 4th Division crossed the canal north of the city and joined hands with the troops from the south. On 2nd November the city was captured, and the troops pushed well to the east. The following day the results of this success began to appear. The Scheldt line was turned, and signs of withdrawal were observed. The Germans fell back between Valenciennes and Le Quesnoy, north of Mormal Forest; and then on the 4th the main attack was delivered.

The 4th, 3rd, and 1st Armies struck on a front of thirty miles between Oisy, on the Sambre, and Valenciennes, across difficult country. In the south the river had to be crossed at the outset. In the centre lay the Forêt de Mormal, and though it had been much weakened by German tree cutting, it was still a formidable obstacle. Le Quesnoy, a heavily fortified town, and a number of streams, crossed the path of advance in the north. On the other hand the troops were never so confident or so certain of their superiority. After an intense bombardment the troops advanced in the wake of a skilful barrage about dawn, and with the greatest resolution and precision continued to press throughout the day. By evening they had advanced five miles. The 9th Corps on the right of the attack, starting at 5.45, had captured Catillon and crossed the Sambre in two hours. The 13th Corps, farther north, began half an hour later, and despite heavy resistance from the 1st German Guard Reserve Division, crossed the Sambre on rafts and captured Landrecies. The 38th (Welsh) Division in less than twenty-four hours had pushed through to the eastern edge of the Mormal Forest. By 8 A.M. the New Zealand Division had surrounded Le Quesnoy and swept eastward; and eight hours later the garrison, over 1,000 strong, surrendered. The other division (37th) of the 4th Corps reached the centre of the forest by nightfall. On the left of the attack the resistance was less vigorous. "By this great victory the enemy's resistance was definitely broken. On the night of the 4th November his troops began to fall back on practically the whole front. Throughout the following days, despite continuous rain, which imposed great hardships on our troops, infantry and cavalry pressed forward with scarcely a check, maintaining close touch with the rapidly retreating Germans." \* In these operations and their developments the British captured 19,000 prisoners and 450 guns, and the 1st French Army, which had advanced at the same time near Guise, took 5,000 prisoners.



**The Battle of the Meuse and Argonne.**—It had become evident that a vigorous attack might completely crush the German resistance on the Meuse, since his communications had now come under the American 16-inch naval guns; and hence the Americans resumed their thrust towards Mezières on 1st November, with Gouraud co-operating on their left. The 4th French Army on the eight-mile front between Semny and Falaise struck north and north-eastward in order to assist the Americans to clear the northern extension of the Argonne forest. Liggett's army, after a heavy bombardment, in which nearly 200,000 gas shells were used, advanced with great resolution. On their left still lay unreduced elements of the Kriemhilde Line, and the advance was least marked on this and the Meuse flank. But they were able to seize the slopes which from near Dun commanded the ground up to Buzancy, while the French reached the bank of the Ardennes Canal, south-west of Chesne. The obstinate left flank now began to yield under the pressure from the west, and on the following day the advance was more marked. In the centre the troops rapidly advanced, captured Buzancy, and reached Fosse. The resistance on the left suddenly broke down, and the troops lost contact with the retiring Germans. The last constructed line, the Freya Line, was now pierced, and on the 3rd the advance was continued. On this day for the first time the American field guns were able to shell the Longuyon-Montmédy railway line, and the German armies were, for the purposes of speedy reinforcement, split into two groups. The supply of the neighbouring sectors was immediately prejudiced, and a further retirement could not be avoided. The interruption of this main lateral line of communications had been the final objective of the Franco-American attack on 26th September. The two great railway systems connecting France with the German home bases were separated by the wooded mass of the Ardennes, an area of necessity ill supplied with roads or railways. The Mezières-Montmédy-Longuyon line lies in advance of it. The railway had first come under the long-range fire of the American navy on 26th October, one month after the offensive began. Eight days later, with the field guns trained upon it, the line ceased to be of value. If the American troops could have achieved that position a fortnight or three weeks earlier, the debacle of which all soldiers dream might have resulted.

**General Retreat.**—On the 4th, Gouraud's troops were in contact with the Americans north of Noirval, and an advance of nearly four miles was achieved; but all attempts to cross the Meuse below Stenay were unsuccessful. But at night four bridges were thrown across the river north of Dun, and the Americans made good their footing, and made an advance east of the river on the following day. Beaumont was taken. The Germans now began to beat a hasty retreat, and on the 6th the Americans reached the outskirts of Sedan. It was surely a strange turn of fortune which sent these splendid sons of the New World against this town, where one of the oldest nations had suffered so bitter a humiliation. The French on the left of the Americans were now nearing Mezières and Charleville, and the war was ringing to a close.

The day before, the German armies had begun to fall back rapidly as far north as the Scheldt. By evening the 3rd British Army was approaching Bavai. The 4th Army reached Maroilles. Débeney was outside La Capelle, and had taken Ver vins. Guillaumat and Gouraud were still held at Porcien and Rethel. On the 7th the Guards entered Bavai, the French central armies marched ten miles between the Oise and the Aisne, and the Americans began, under fire, to bridge the river



From August 8th to the Armistice: the shaded area shows the main British thrust.



at Sedan. On the following day the 1st and 5th British Armies captured Condé, where the British troops had begun the war, crossed the Scheldt below Antoing, and reached the outskirts of Maubeuge. Débeney had crossed the Avesnes-La Capelle road, and the Americans drove the Germans from their last footing east of the Meuse. On the 9th the 62nd Division and Guards entered Maubeuge, and the Canadians approached Mons. Farther north the 2nd Army reached Renaix, and the 5th Army entered Tournai. The French cavalry reached the Belgian frontier. Hirson fell. The whole line was now advancing, preceded by cyclists. On the 10th the British advance patrols were near Grammont, and on the outskirts of Ath; and the Canadians were surrounding Mons. There, alone, was any substantial opposition encountered; and the Canadians were met by an organised and tenacious machine-gun fire. The French crossed the Meuse east of Mezières, and encountered a determined counter-attack from the Prussian Guard. That evening, thousands of gas and incendiary shells were poured into Mezières, and carried a last horror of war into the homes of thousands of civilians. Farther south the American 1st and 2nd Army, the latter under Bullard, attacked vigorously on a seventy-mile front between Sedan and the east of Pont-à-Mousson. Stenay was taken. In a little over six weeks' fighting the Americans had suffered 115,529 casualties. It was a costly battle.

But the end had come. Mons was entered early next morning, all the garrison being killed or taken prisoner. The armistice came into force at eleven o'clock, and very fittingly the war came to a close with the British armies on the spot where, for them, it had begun. But at that time there were but four divisions of magnificent troops. At the end of the war the British had in the field a splendid force, which had won the admiration of the world. The Americans, too, had won their spurs very creditably. The Belgians had come to their own after a struggle which tried every army. Of the French it is difficult to speak with moderation. Those superb troops had borne the brunt of the strife, and at the end of four years had triumphed over the supreme test. No one can fail to be moved at the sufferings of France, nor to sympathise with their victory. If the war had not ended when it did their triumph might have been greater, for Castlenau stood ready in Lorraine to attack at the order of his former subordinate, on 14th November, with twenty divisions. The Germans well knew the blow impended; but their experience of invasion, as carried out by themselves, did not encourage them to desire it for their own country.

\* \* \* \* \*

It remains to follow the concluding steps by which the armistice was brought about. On 27th October the fourth German Note was sent to President Wilson. It was short but pertinent. The peace negotiations rested in the hands of the people, to whom the military powers were also subject. "The German Government now awaits the proposals for an armistice. . . ." It was after this Note that Ludendorff's resignation was announced. He was succeeded by General Groener. On 5th November, Mr. Wilson notified the German Government that the Allies had agreed to make peace on the terms "laid down in the President's address to Congress of January 1918, and the principles of settlement enunciated in his subsequent addresses." But they reserved freedom on the subject of freedom of the seas, and defined their meaning of the term reparation. "By it they understand that compensation will be made by Germany for all the damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by

sea, and from the air." For the terms of armistice the Germans were referred to Marshal Foch. On 6th November German delegates reached the Allied line. At 9.15 P.M. on the following day they were directed to a spot near La Capelle, where the searchlights fell upon cross-roads. The firing ceased, and the delegates passed through. It was on this day that the German fleet revolt occurred, and the sailors seized Kiel and Schleswig. It is reported that the German navy had been ordered to make a sortie. This would have been mere murder. But there is sufficient reason for their outbreak without this. The navy had been penned in harbour, and had gradually lost *moral*. It was a full month since the Berlin crowds had cried, "Peace at last!" and under the irresistible approach of the invading armies the *moral* of the whole people broke down. The revolution spread the next day to the North Sea coast towns and Bavaria. On the 9th there was fighting in Berlin, and on this day the Kaiser and Crown Prince abdicated. On 29th October the Bavarian Premier had notified Berlin that the Bavarian Royal House claimed the Imperial throne in case of the Kaiser's abdication; but the Bavarian Diet had deposed their dynasty on the 8th. There is a touch of irony in the coincidence. Prince Max of Baden now became Regent of the Empire, and Friedrich Ebert, the Social Democrat, the Chancellor.

But meanwhile the German delegates had been conducted at 9 A.M. on 8th November to Réthondes, on the Compiègne-Soissons railway, where Foch's General Head Quarters lay in a train. There were present Marshal Foch; General Weygand, his Chief of Staff; Vice-Admiral Sir Rosslyn Weymss, First Sea Lord; and Vice-Admiral Sims of the American Navy. Herr Erzberger, the Catholic deputy, at once asked for an immediate armistice. Foch refused, and then read out slowly and emphatically the terms upon which it would be granted. Seventy-two hours were allowed for reply. The German delegates refused to accept them on their own responsibility, and referred to their Government. The terms were sent by courier to the German General Head Quarters at Spa, where they arrived at 10 A.M. on 10th November. The revolution had now spread to Berlin, and the Kaiser and Crown Prince fled to Holland. At 5 A.M. the next morning (11th) the armistice terms were signed, the signatories being F. Foch, R. E. Weymss, Erzberger, A. Oberndorff, Winterfeldt, von Salow. The terms were indeed crushing. They included immediate evacuation of occupied territories; repatriation of all their inhabitants; surrender of 2,500 heavy and 2,500 field guns, 25,000 machine guns, 17,000 aeroplanes, including all the night bombing machines; evacuation of the territory left of the Rhine and of three great bridge-heads; surrender of 5,000 locomotives, 150,000 wagons, and 5,000 motor lorries; all mines and delayed action fuses to be revealed; the right of requisition to be ceded to the Allied armies of occupation; repatriation of all Allied prisoners; evacuation of Turkey, Rumania, Austria-Hungary, Russia; renunciation of the treaties of Bukarest and Brest-Litovsk; freedom of access to territories evacuated in the East granted; evacuation of East Africa; restoration of gold taken from Russia and Rumania; surrender of all submarines, those which cannot take the sea being disarmed; surrender of a designated number of surface craft—a great fleet; Black Sea ports to be evacuated; Allied merchant shipping restored; all restrictions on the trading of Neutrals with the Allies to be withdrawn, the Neutrals being notified.

The surrender of the German High Seas Fleet to the British Fleet in the North Sea was the most spectacular of these terms, a very cogent symbol of complete



defeat. The scruple or oversight which allowed the German caretakers to sink ships later in Scapa Flow could not detract from the significance of the surrender. The fleet was only useful as a symbol. The actual ships tended later to create friction among the Allies, owing to the differences of opinion as to their disposition. No such terms were demanded from any of Germany's allies, and it was fitting that the Power which embarked on the war so light-heartedly should suffer the worst humiliation. For many months the peace negotiations dragged on, and at length the result, a compromise, neither yielding the safeguards of a purely military peace nor calling forth the response of a peace of conciliation, was arrived at. There was some show of resistance on the part of Germany, for the terms were indeed crushing. But in the end the peace was signed in the *Galerie des Glaces*, Versailles, where King William of Prussia was proclaimed German Emperor in 1871, before representatives of all the Allies on June 28, 1919, at 3.12 in the afternoon. The first signature was that of Hermann Müller, the new German Foreign Minister. The second that of Dr. Bell. Then signed the American delegates : Mr. Wilson, Mr. Lansing, Colonel House, Mr. Henry White, and General Bliss. The British delegation came next : Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Balfour, Lord Milner, and Mr. Barnes, followed by the Dominion delegates : Mr. Doherty and Sir George Foster (Canada), Mr. Hughes and Sir Joseph Cook (Australia), Mr. Massey (New Zealand), General Botha and General Smuts (South Africa), Mr. Montagu and the Maharajah of Bikanir (India). Then came the French delegates : M. Clemenceau, M. Pichon, M. Klotz, M. Tardieu, and M. Cambon. Next signed Baron Sonnino, Signor Crispi, and the Marquis Imperiali for Italy. And then followed Baron Makino, Marquis Saionji, and three other Japanese delegates. Other Allied delegates followed, ending with Czecho-Slovakia.

The peace was in fact the most crushing in history ; but Germany was irretrievably beaten by the arbitrament she had invoked. The terms of the peace did but register the fact.

### VIII. CONCLUSION.

A WRITER in the *Militärwochenblatt* summed up the causes of the German defeat in these words : " Our defeat has been so complete because the forces of the Central Powers have been overtaxed and completely exhausted by the pursuit of unattainable military and political aims." This statement goes to the heart of the matter. Germany much overrated her power and underrated the power and will of her enemies. Once the curtain rang up on the combatants it was as certain as anything could be that Germany must lose. The weakness of this generalisation is shown by the fact that the unforeseen actually occurred. One of the Allies made peace. But it is not yet certain whether America would not have joined the Allies sooner if she had known how costly the struggle was. When Russia went out of the Alliance the United States entered it ; and, again, only the unforeseen could snatch victory from the Allies. Their total resources were so much greater than those of the enemy, and Napoleon long ago stated the small chance of winning a *war* against long odds. But the war dragged on perforce, because Germany had a much greater proportion of her resources realised at the beginning, and the Allies were committed to fighting piecemeal. Germany fought skilfully for the power to take her foes in detail. It was for this reason that she maintained the offensive as long as she had the power, and

thereby compelled the Allies to such costly battles as those of Loos and Champagne. They had to attempt some relief of Russia; and Britain had not yet had time to train thoroughly an army which could exert a decisive influence. The German armies fought many times, and were able to defeat many armies. It was the tragedy of the situation, and it led to losses so vast that even now we can hardly realise them. They have been declared as follows\* :—

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing and Prisoners.	Total.
Germany . . . . .	1,600,000	4,064,000	721,000	6,385,000
Austria-Hungary . . . . .	800,000	3,200,000		4,000,000
Turkey . . . . .	250,000			250,000
Bulgaria . . . . .	100,000			100,000
France . . . . .	1,071,300		760,300	1,831,600
Russia . . . . .	1,700,000	4,950,000	2,500,000	9,150,000
Britain . . . . .	658,704	2,032,142	359,145	3,049,991
Italy . . . . .	465,560	959,138		1,424,698
America . . . . .	53,169	179,625	3,323	236,117
Belgium . . . . .	102,000			
Rumania . . . . .	100,000			
Servia and Montenegro . . . . .	100,000			
	7,000,733	15,384,905		

Thus, on these figures, we find a death-roll of over 7,000,000, and the number of those either dead or injured is over 22,000,000. If we add on a probable estimate for the wounded where these are not given, the total number of the killed and wounded would be 27,000,000; and it is probably nearer 30,000,000. These terrible figures represent an outpouring of blood such as no one before the war would have imagined in his wildest dreams. The question whether they were inevitable must arise, and we cannot feel any pleasure in stating that they certainly were not inevitable. As we have seen, the war was bound to be costly, since the Allies had to pay for their unpreparedness. But the war dragged on longer than it need have done for several reasons. It would have been much shorter and cheaper if the Allies had made their maximum effort at the beginning instead of waiting to be schooled by suffering to the knowledge that half efforts are an extravagance which cannot be afforded in war. But democracies cannot easily be brought to undertake sacrifices of which they do not see the necessity, and the masses can never weigh evidence carefully. It is possible, therefore, that the yoking of the full national energy to the war could only come after years had shown the futility of makeshifts. But a truly great statesman would have made a bold appeal at the beginning. Assuming the factors to be as they were, we are again driven to inquire whether the war might not have been shortened if they had been better applied. Of this there is much less doubt. Almost to the end there was little vision on either side. Marshal von der Goltz had realised that the new wars would call for new commanders, with numerous helpers full of learning and initiative. But in the actual fact the commanders did not exact the

\* It is not possible to give the accurate figures. Thus the American Chief of Staff announced that the French had lost by death 234,000 more than the number given above.



full effort of all the material which was put at their disposal. Take, for instance, but one factor which had an essential bearing upon the decision. The tanks were discovered in 1916, and actually used in the battle of the Somme. But their full tactical application did not appear until over a year later, when both French and English began feverishly to construct light models after the Battle of Cambrai. Two long fighting seasons were wasted in beating against the Hindenburg walls, when the Allies had within their hands an instrument which made fixed defences and all but continuous water lines an irrelevance.

The war had to be won on the Western front. But the Dardanelles campaign, still more Lord Fisher's Baltic project, would, if successful, have led to a better use of the Russian resources and an economy in those of the Western Allies. In these circumstances the Western front would probably have been ruptured two years earlier. Easternism was simply an expression of impatience at the repetition of attacks which a detached mind saw were foredoomed to failure. The "side shows" had their rôle, but it was a side rôle and not the principal one. The defection of the Eastern Allies first is not evidence that the Western front was turned on the East. "Bulgaria seceded," said the *Frankfurter Zeitung*,\* "as soon as all hope of victory had disappeared," just as the German people revolted when they realised all was lost. "The dreadful realisation permeated the country. 'We are betrayed' . . . All confidence at the front and at home had vanished."† Everything turned upon the Western front, where the main enemy armies ever lay. When that began to waver, the most cynical of Germany's Allies looked to herself. It is still difficult to appraise the generals correctly, but there seems to have been one man of genius and a great number of merely competent soldiers. Foch's genius consisted in a knowledge of military principles so fully assimilated that it had become instinct, and an indomitable will. In general, the two qualities seem to vary inversely, and knowledge seems to weaken will or will to attempt the rôle of knowledge. From this knowledge, which had become a second nature to a mind of peculiar clarity, there came an almost infallible recognition of the essentials of any given military problem. In such a mind there was no soil for confused action in which desire launched operations which the mind knew could never secure the support needed to carry them to success. Ludendorff's was quite another type of mind. He tended to bold, almost grandiose, plans, and had an extraordinary mastery of detail. If he had possessed Foch's instinct for the essential and his iron resolution, the war might have had a very different ending. But his will wavered in March when it should have been set firm, and persisted when it should have changed. History will not forgive Ludendorff for not dividing the Allied armies in March, and for not recognising that his safest course in July was to retreat to the Meuse.

But Ludendorff, with "unity of command," lost if Foch won. An extraordinary confusion of ideas underlay the controversy about the command. In effect it was reducible to the subordination of the Allied armies to a *French* commander. In the circumstances no other solution was possible. But could Nivelle or that consummate tactician Pétain have led the Allies to victory? That is perhaps an unprofitable question. But we know that the former commander had a short reign, and that there was considerable unrest in the French army after the Aisne offensive of 1917. Mr. Lloyd George touched the heart of the difficulty when, in a speech at a dinner to Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, he said: "When you come to dif-

\* June 8, 1919.

† *Ibid.*

ferent races, different nationalities, fundamental differences of temperament and outlook, it is exceeding difficult to get combined action, to remove suspicions which are always lurking about. . . . We were unable to marshal the whole of our overwhelming forces, and often to concentrate them at one point, because we were dealing with one great nation and army, and because we had four or five different nationalities and nations to deal with." The controversy about "unity of command" was therefore always a little ridiculous. When you have two nations with their armies in a foreign field, with different methods of training, different temperaments, and divergent immediate interests, it is idle to talk of unity of command. How could the British army cease to take a predominant interest in the Channel ports? How could the French army cease to regard Paris as its first charge? But these two interests meant that under pressure the armies would diverge. The fact that the reserves who could have arrested the retreat in March were maintained so far from Gough's right flank suggests how inevitably this divergence of interest operated, and how grave its results must be. For when they were thrown in they appeared piecemeal, and the losses were therefore higher. It is Foch's supreme praise that during his period as Commander-in-Chief he overcame his burning nationality, sacrificing his beloved countrymen for the Channel coast when that had become Ludendorff's new lodestar, and seeing only the one end—victory.

Foch had his reward in the complete defeat of the enemy. Sir Douglas Haig described the military situation on the British front on the morning of 11th November in words which may be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Western front generally: "In the fighting since 1st November our troops had broken the enemy's resistance beyond possibility of recovery, and had forced on him a disorderly retreat along the whole front of the British armies. Thereafter the enemy was capable *neither of accepting nor refusing battle*.\* The utter confusion of his troops, the state of his railways, congested with abandoned trains, the capture of huge quantities of rolling stock and material, all showed that our attack had been decisive. . . . The strategic plan of the Allies had been realised with a completeness rarely seen in war. When the armistice was signed by the enemy his defensive powers had already been definitely destroyed. A continuance of hostilities could only have meant disaster to the German armies and the armed invasion of Germany." †

There can be no question of the truth of this diagnosis. On 11th November the German armies had only seventeen divisions in reserve, and of these only two were fresh. And all the units had come to have different values. The numbers have been given as they were disclosed to the Reichstag on 2nd October. When the armistice terms were being considered, Hindenburg telegraphed an urgent request to accept all the conditions stipulated by the Allies without any delay, because he could not undertake to hold the German army together any longer. Herr Fehrenbach, who made this disclosure, thus describes the reading out of the armistice conditions: "The Armistice Commission's telegram was then read stating that there was nothing to do but immediately to accept the conditions. Then the telegram from Hindenburg was read, requesting that all the conditions be immediately accepted, . . . otherwise he would be compelled to capitulate with the entire army. Herr Ebert then put the question: 'Who opposes this step?' whereupon followed that fearful silence. I hope I shall never again experience so terrible a silence." ‡

\* My italics.

† Haig's Dispatch.

‡ Reuter from the *Rheinische Westfaelische Zeitung*.



The German people have been painted as thoroughly militarist. No service is done to truth by minimising this fact. If the future is not to be as the past, the world's statesmen must recognise that war is a possibility which vigorous peoples will always have recourse to until it is realised that the mass of the people can never gain by it. Truth has been too much at the mercy of well-meaning people in the past. Not even a reasonable compromise can be secured until both sides of a question are thoroughly grasped. There are some instincts in all men which are anti-social, and it is similar with nations. We can never approach the prevention of war until we first realise that to certain types of mind and under certain stimuli war makes a deep and almost sacred appeal. A flamboyant German treatise which appeared before the war was entitled "World-power or Downfall." But the price of pulling down that worn-out temple seems almost to have been the downfall of civilisation. It rests with the future to say whether the precarious bridgehead which the ages have established over the sway of barbarism shall be overwhelmed or broadened until it occupies all that strange region where primitive impulses still thrive.

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